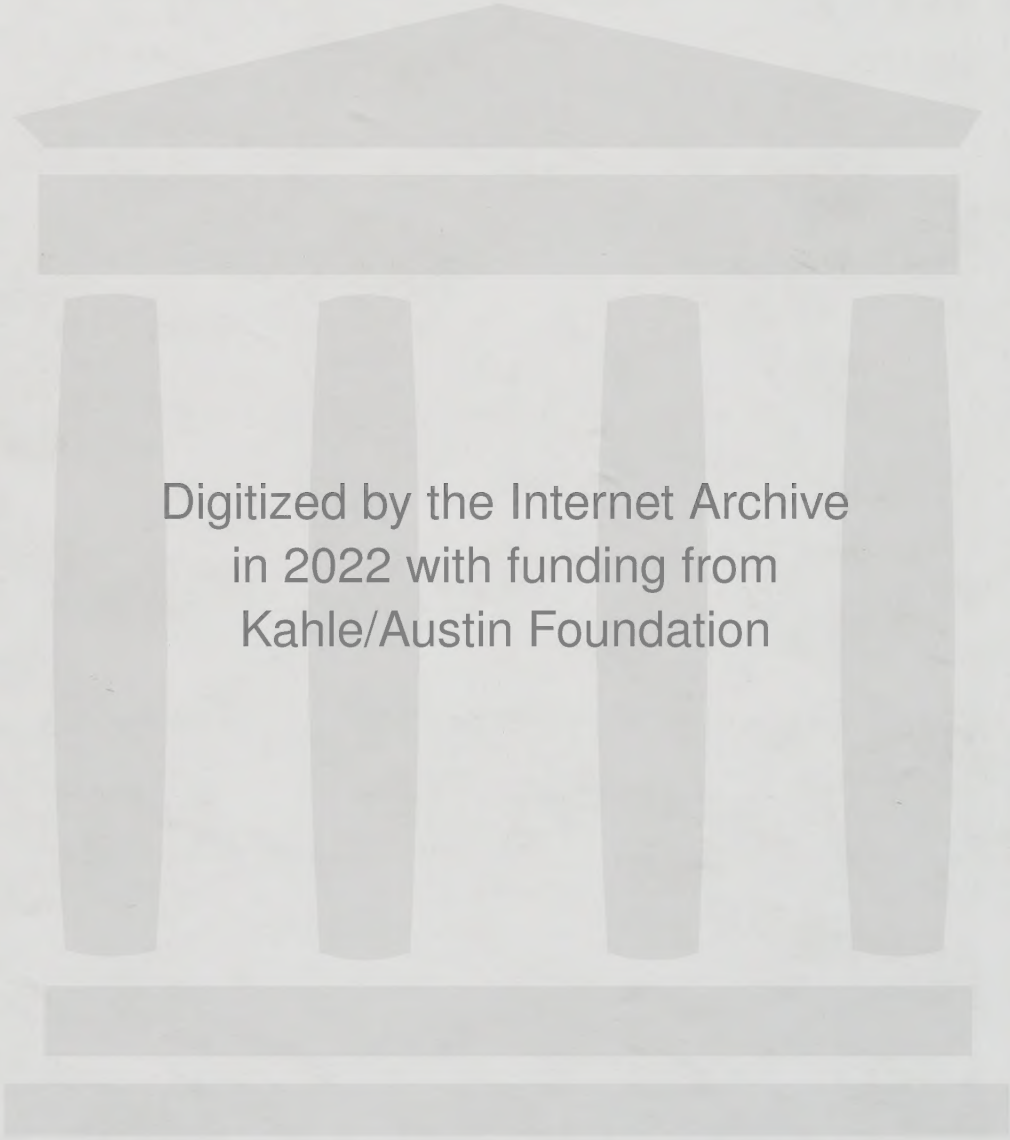
POPPY'S TALES

A LIFETIME OF STORIES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A LIFETIME OF STORIES

by Edwin S. Kirby

Indianapolis, Indiana

2010

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FOR WENDY

Whose patience and tolerance I test on a daily basis;

Whose words of understanding and knowledge always make it better;

Whose strength of will and character are unequaled;

Whose love and comfort are constant and forever;

And who, regardless of how old she may become, will always be wise beyond her years.

THE WRITER'S DISCLAIMER

Having spent a major portion of my life surrounded by lawyers, I find it best to continue in their tradition of the most conservative "CYA" approach to all matters important or mundane. I am also aware of the legal profession's proclivity for words: the more words, the greater the billable time. Since this disclaimer has not been researched, written, or blessed by legal counsel, you may find its brevity to be rather refreshing.

This is a work of mostly fact and a little fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the products of the writer's memory or imagination – or both. They may or may not be used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons living or dead, or to events or locales, is either entirely coincidental or intentional.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

An undertaking such as this often includes the efforts of several people. This project is no different from most. *Poppy's Tales* has required the services of an editor, an advisor, a mentor, a confidant, and a sparring partner. Because this is a low budget operation, we filled all of these roles with one person.

Did you ever stand in a registration line in college to get into the class of a very special professor? An English professor? For a course in early English literature? Probably not. Me neither. But then, I didn't know Linda Rinker back then. [Ed. note: She wasn't even born back then! Or at least, she was still in elementary school. Well, junior high.]

I met Linda through her friendship with Wendy, born from numerous committees, classes, and governing bodies at Second Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis. My first meeting with Linda regarding *Poppy's Tales* was in the spring of 2009. Her first question was, "When do you want to have it finished?" I answered, "Christmas." She responded, "What year?" I replied (weakly), "This year." In very measured tones, she said. "Do you want it done or do you want it done well?" (Somewhere in here, I need to win one – just a little eensie one . . . please?) Of course, I wanted it done well. Linda replied, "Fine, I will be happy to work with you." (Initially, I thought this was my first victory, until I realized she had just taken over management of the project.) As I look back on that conversation today, the word *Hallelujah!* comes to mind, followed by something like, "The gods were with me."

Dr. Linda Rinker graduated with honors from Ohio Wesleyan University, a National Merit Scholar and Phi Beta Kappa. She earned her MA and PhD from Northwestern University, where she was a Woodrow Wilson Fellow and University Fellow. She taught linguistics and literature at Kent State University, where she became Assistant Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. She moved to Wells College, where she was Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the College. Linda has been a poet since she was six and a photographer since she was eight. She took up pottery and then watercolor in her fifties. Her PhD is in medieval English language and literature.

The author and the team.

With a *curriculum vitae* such as this, you must be wondering why she is tolerating me. It's quite simple: Wendy begged her. Perhaps Linda just likes a challenge. [Ed. note: Nope – it's just that Ned makes me laugh.] Whatever the reasons, her knowledge of the business aspects, her common sense and experienced good judgment, and her command of everything having anything to do with the English language make her a perfect fit for this beginner. Most importantly, her ready smile and gentle use of her velvet hammer made the entire project a wonderfully fun experience.

I truly hope you enjoy our finished product as much as I have enjoyed working with and learning from Linda. Would I stand in a very long line to sign up for Dr. Rinker's course in early English literature? You bet!

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PROLOGUE

This might have been a *Preamble*, or a *Foreword* – either seems appropriate. *Preamble* permits me to begin my ambling and sets the tone for the book; *Foreword* suggests that there are, indeed, more words to follow. I also considered *Foreplay*, but my editor said not to even think about it.

What this is NOT is an autobiography. It will not be in any chronological order, and I wish to state that not everything written here is either true or accurate, and some of it may be wildly embellished. (My lawyers, such as they are, have advised me that the previous sentence will prevent you from successfully suing me.)

Though it may be hard to believe, my writing "career" started many years ago. I was first published when I wrote a poem in the fourth grade at Central Ward School in Urbana, Ohio. The Urbana school system selected it to be included in a publication of the State of Ohio Department of Education. If I were to share it with you, I am certain that you would be as puzzled as I am now as to why it was chosen. (Maybe it had something to do with the fact that my mother was on the school board.) At any rate, it was pretty awful – but hey, I was only ten – and my mommy and daddy were proud.

The next time I was published, more than thirty years later, was in the *Urbana Daily Citizen*. The local paper chose to reprint an editorial I wrote for the Urbana High School *Boosters Club Bulletin*, in my role as editor and publisher of that fine publication. This was a somewhat sentimental role, since my father had started the *Boosters Club Bulletin* in the 1950's. He too was editor and publisher, and the *Bulletin* was printed on the old type-set printing machine in the office at Kirby Hatcheries. I still sort of like to reread it for the memories it brings back of family, community, schools, and Friday nights at a high school football game. I believe my dad might have been proud of this one, too.

I hope you will find some of these assorted tales to be of substance or humor – or simply worth sharing. They are about life and death, about lessons learned along the way, about experiences and events, some shared with others and some not, and about family, friends, heroes, role models, and those who have simply touched our hearts and our souls along the way. They will walk through these pages, each with her or his own style and class, and – one hopes – a few with a thought or message worth remembering. The people will include those whom God has given much, those whom God has given little, and (the greatest number) the average Joe and Jane who have walked through all of our lives by the hundreds, each of whom has left an indelible mark.

Everyone has (or will have) similar memories and experiences. I do not consider mine to be any more or less interesting or worthy of repetition than anyone else's. *Poppy's Tales* started as a project for my grandchildren, hence the title, *Poppy's Tales*. I wanted to share with my grandchildren (and beyond) what life was about from "Poppy's" perspective during the 20th century and into the 21st. It is true that most of us are forgotten within two generations; even so, we are remiss if we do not share what we have experienced and learned, if only to help succeeding generations avoid the mistakes and pitfalls that we have encountered and learned from.

This project also began because of a lifetime regret of mine. That regret is the fact that I never got to know my parents as an adult. My mother passed away when I was 21 and my father when I was 24. I was still of an age when it was "all about me," when I knew so very much about everything, and when

anyone over the age of forty was irrelevant. My parents never knew any of their grandchildren. What a shame. They would have been wondrous grandparents. And how excited they would have been at the prospect of having thirteen great-grandchildren; of knowing and loving, and nurturing, and yes, regaling their grandchildren with tales of how it used to be "back in my day."

And so it is with *Poppy's Tales*; it is a collection of stories about how it was during my lifetime, from the earliest days to the present. They are tales about people, and about the times and events that happened along the way. They describe the good, the bad, the funny and the ugly. Most are happy, and a few are sad. They encompass people who have passed through my life, many still remaining after having shared decades of experiences. The people include a few who have "made their mark" during their lives. It also includes those who have just been good and loyal friends and family, neighbors and co-workers. It shares some stories of those who did much with their lives, even though having a modest beginning, and those who strived to do much, but just never quite got it all together.

What is missing from all of this are the stories of my parents as they grew, entered their adult lives, adopted a little boy as their only child, and then advised, counseled, laughed and cried as that little boy passed through his adulthood. There are a few reminiscences of my childhood, and a few references regarding my parents, given to me by their friends over the years, but that is about it. My adult role models and advisors and counselors were friends of my parents. And loyal they were – to my parents, and to me.

I suspect that their loyalty and caring for me, in lieu of mother and dad, provides some basis for my rather intense loyalty to those who began with me early in my life – my high school classmates, college fraternity brothers, and a variety of family members. My experience was, and is, that that's the way it is supposed to be. Our roots, such as they may be, are what have molded us and framed us for life. How can they be ignored? On the contrary, they are our best tools for learning and growing, and indeed, sharing with those who succeed us . . . or so I believe.

Whatever the reasons, *Poppy's Tales* are just that, and nothing more. They are a series of stories, in no particular order of chronology, geography, history, people, places or events. They are stories that my children are tired of hearing, and that my grandchildren soon will be. My hope is that they pass on a little of the flavor of "how it used to be," and perhaps include a small sprinkling of a lesson or two learned along the way.

There . . . it is all settled. We now have a title that is loosely descriptive of what follows: a few snippets of recollections; a sprinkling of animal stories and farming anecdotes, and a large dose of "assorted tales."

You may wish to stop here because it won't get much better.

Neddie with his mother, Leah.

Neddie with his father, Ned.

IN THE BEGINNING

A good place to start is always at the beginning. For me, that would be January 2, 1938. That is my date of birth, but like so many things, it isn't all quite that simple. Plans for me were in place several years before my birth. Therein lies the story.

My parents were Ned and Leah Kirby. They were both born in Urbana, Ohio, in 1903 and went through school together, including Wittenberg College (now a University) in Springfield. They were married in 1925. In 1928, my mother gave birth to their first child, a son. Sadly, he was stillborn; the small grave marker in the family plot in Oakdale Cemetery is engraved with the words: "INFANT SON OF EDWIN AND LEAH KIRBY." After several years, it was apparent that my mother could not give birth to any more children, and so my parents began to explore the possibilities of adoption.

They were ultimately connected with Dr. Inglis, a physician in Columbus, Ohio, and the wheels began to turn. Through contacts with the Methodist Children's Home in Dublin and White Cross Hospital in Columbus, they learned of the pending birth of a baby who would be put up for adoption at the time of birth. All the *i's* were dotted and the *t's* were crossed, and within a few days of January 2, 1938, Ned and Leah Kirby brought their new little baby boy back home to Urbana.

Birth announcements were soon printed and mailed, declaring young Master Edwin Schneider Kirby to be "The First KiRBY CHICK of 1938." And the rest is history. Well, not quite. Until 1997, the above story was all that I knew of my birth, with the exception of some vague reference to the fact that my birth mother was the daughter of a Methodist minister.

In 1997, I began thinking about gene pools, DNA, medical history of my birth parents, and similar health concerns common to people approaching their 60th birthday. While I had no intention of abusing the confidentiality of the circumstances of my birth, I thought it might be worthwhile to attempt to find out what I could about my birth parents. At the very least, just learning whether they were still alive or not would provide some insight into their general health.

My next step was to contact a good friend and fraternity brother who practices law in Columbus and is a former City Prosecutor. In that role he has had a lot of experience with private investigators and clandestine-type operations. Through his efforts, I was put in contact with a private investigator (P.I.), and we were off and running. The first piece of documentation was my "real" birth certificate. The only one I had ever seen before was the one listing Edwin and Leah Kirby as my parents. This original document listed my birth mother by name, and my father as "unknown." Now there's a funny feeling. It also listed the birth as "illegitimate." It also gave the child with only a last name, and listed my birth mother's age as 15. So I take these tidbits of information from my birth certificate, put them together with the previous information that my birth mother was the daughter of a Methodist minister, and decide this is interesting enough to pursue a little further. The address of my birth mother led our P.I. to the small southern Ohio town of Bourneville.

Bourneville is in Ross County, about 12 miles southwest of Chillicothe on State Route 50. It is little more than a blip on the road and typical of many of the small farming communities in the rolling hills of southern Ohio. It is, however, approximately five miles straight west of Knockemstiff, Ohio. No kidding. Look it up. Now there's some roots to be proud of!

The first person that our investigator spoke with in Bourneville happened to be a classmate of my birth mother. She remembered her well, and also remembered that the family was forced to move from the community when it was learned that my birth mother was pregnant. It is unknown to us whether or not my mother's father was able to find another pulpit, or exactly where they moved at that time. To prove that it is a small town, this lady mentioned to the investigator that her daughter now lives in the original church parsonage, the same dwelling occupied by my mother and her family some 70 years ago.

The family also included a son, who went to college in Indiana and then to seminary, where he studied to become a Methodist minister. There was also a sister who went to college at Ohio University and graduated in music education. She later retired, living her last years in a retirement home in Lebanon, Ohio. Upon her death, her services were held at the Walter and Schoedinger Funeral Home in Urbana, Ohio; her brother, now an ordained Methodist minister, conducted the service. The pastor was at that time serving as the pastor for the Ohio Masonic Home in Springfield.

With all of this information, it was rather simple to find the then-current address of my birth mother. She was found living in the small community of Port Jefferson, Ohio, about five miles northeast of Sidney. She lives there with her husband (probably not my father). While in Port Jefferson, our investigator learned that although my mother and her family are Catholics, she also was a volunteer at the Methodist church. It was also learned that she worked for a period of time at Hussey's Restaurant in Port Jefferson. This is a restaurant we visited on several occasions in the 1960's and 70's.

On a subsequent trip, it was learned there was another son, my half brother, who lives in Nashville, Tennessee, where he owns a clothier business. He caters primarily to country singers and also has another outlet in southern Indiana. He has at least one son, who was seen visiting his grandparents in Port Jefferson during this second visit. It was also learned that my mother's sister was cared for by my birth mother for several years before she was moved to the nursing home in Lebanon. Her funeral service had been in Urbana because she taught music for 22 years, at least some of that time in the Urbana area.

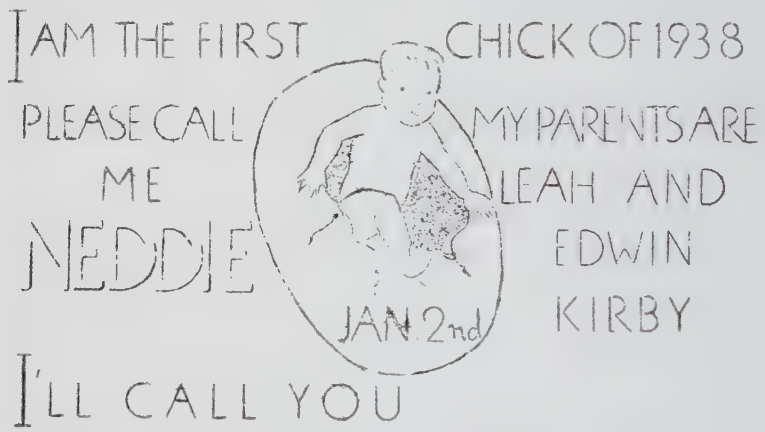
It was also on this second visit that our investigator decided to visit the residence, asking for directions as an excuse for conversation. He hoped to catch my mother home alone, so he could tell her a little about me. When he knocked at the door, however, my mother's husband answered the door. They had a brief conversation, during which the investigator saw my mother in the background. He described her as "thin, light brown hair that is graying, healthy-looking, well-dressed, neat, attractive and elderly."

Our P.I. was informed during this visit that my mother's husband seldom left the house. He concluded that if he were to contact her directly, the best opportunity might be by telephone. Following our ongoing instructions, he was not to compromise any confidentiality regarding my relationship with her, but to simply let her know of my existence and leave it as her option whether or not to pursue the contact further. This was a major consideration, because we assumed that her husband likely did not know of my existence. His reputation was one that left concerns that he would likely be very difficult for her to deal with if he was informed about me.

Later the same day, the P.I. made a call from a local phone booth. The husband answered the phone, and the P.I. asked to speak with his wife. She came to the phone and said hello. The P.I. spoke quietly, identified himself, and advised her that he was in Port Jefferson. He then asked her if she would consider meeting him somewhere, then or at a later date, so that he could discuss me with her. She immediately stated in a firm tone, "I am not interested." The P.I. asked if he could tell her about me for a minute or so, at which point she hung up the phone.

There has been no further attempt at any direct contact. To the best of my knowledge, she is still alive and living in Port Jefferson. (Note: She has since passed away and was cremated, and there is no known burial site.) I recognize there have been many "reunions" of people in similar circumstances, particularly in recent years. Nonetheless, it is my belief that to impose myself upon her, without her beforehand knowledge and consent, would not have been the right thing to do. Frankly, I think the courts are wrong in releasing sealed birth records to anyone, thus ignoring the wishes and agreements that were made at the time of birth. I think it is appropriate to do so only after the death of the mother, or earlier with her permission.

Seventy years ago, she and her family made a decision, and part of that decision included a high degree of confidentiality. That is why my birth certificate lists my adoptive parents as my birth parents. That is the way it was done back then. My birth mother gave birth to me when she was but a child. Yet, she gave to me the greatest gift of all; the gift of life. For that reason alone, I would never knowingly do anything that could possibly bring her harm or discomfort.



Neddie's birth announcement.

HALLOWED GROUND

In the southeast corner of Champaign County, Ohio, lies a half section of land (320 acres) purchased by John Kirby and John S. Kirby on September 16, 1862. The price was $13,600. The farm lies directly west of the Ludlow line and is at the eastern edge of Pretty Prairie. The farm is nestled along Buck Creek, near the merging point of Dugan's Ditch from the west and the tiny Mill Run from the North. The farm was purchased from William Vance, one of the early land barons of western Ohio. John Kirby and John S. Kirby were the third owners of the property. The United States government sold the original tract to Abijah Ward on July 20, 1812. There is no listed price on that transaction, with Mr. Ward likely receiving the land as a payment for his services in the Revolutionary War or the War of 1812. Mr. Ward's heirs sold the farm to William Vance on August 8, 1829, for the sum of $1500. The original purchase document from the United States government includes the signature of President James Madison.

The Ludlow line defines the eastern edge of the original Virginia Military Survey and abuts the Kirby Farm as well as the start of the fertile prairie lands known as Pretty Prairie. The Virginia Military Survey was originally initiated by the fledgling United States Government for two very good reasons. ONE: The government had no money, but a great deal of land. TWO: It needed to pay the veterans who fought for the freedom of all in the war of our Revolution. What a wonderful plan! Soldiers got paid with land, and our expanding country created a settlement program for the wilderness lands of the western frontier. The view of this prairie from our farm home porch is stunning at sunset, unbroken

as far as the eye can see, save for the occasional wooded areas and small clusters of farm buildings. It is, indeed, a place of peace and contentment, and a refuge for thoughts, dreams and meditation. It is an escape from anything that needs to be left behind and a home for that which is good for the soul. Why do I say so?

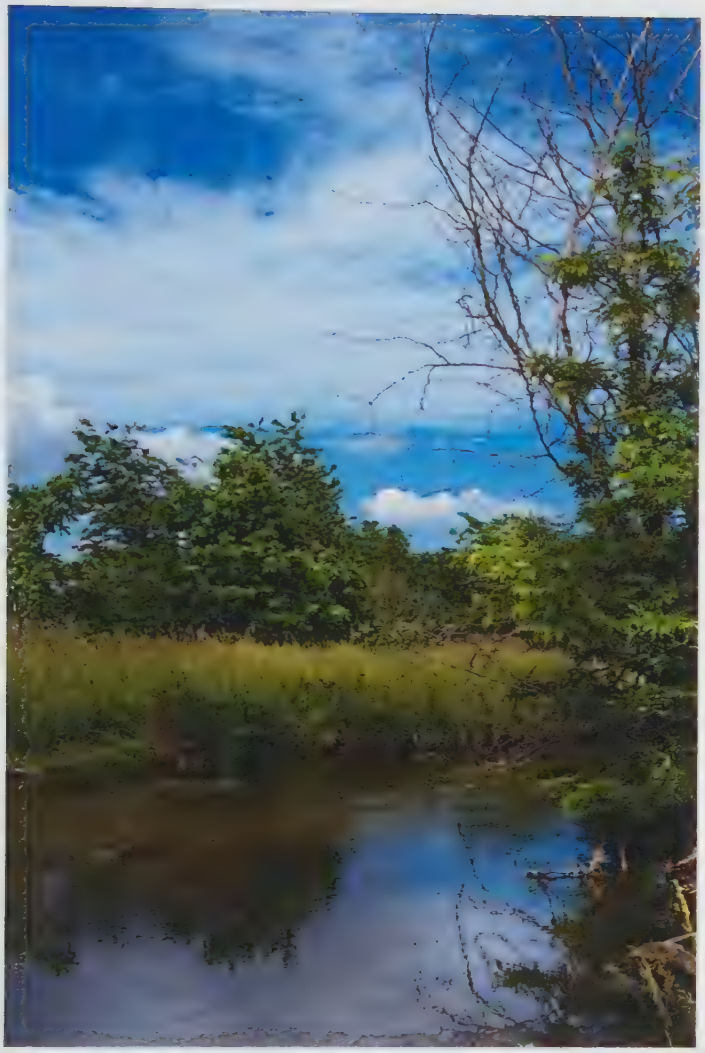
Because I know it to be true.

The farm house is included in the 1862 purchase agreement and is thus at least 150 years old. The basement walls reveal logs hand-hewn on two sides; the original tree bark still covers the remaining two sides of the logs. Much of the exterior foundation is of brick, but the interior basement walls show mortared stones, likely gathered from the river bed of Buck Creek. The plank flooring of the original portion of the house reveals some lovely finished ash and oak timbers. The east side additions to the original house provide a slanting (sinking?) floor, but the original is as solid as . . . well, as solid as a rock.

The 50-acre wood to the east side of the farm borders on Benson Road and is presently home to a herd of deer estimated to be 70 to 80 in number. In the several years since we have banned all but bow-hunting on the farm, the herd has doubled in size and is frankly too large for the woods to support. But who wants a bunch of gun hunters on their property, stealthily waiting to kill Bambi's mommy?

The farm has once again become a gathering place for friends and family alike.

Note: The beautiful color photographs of the farm as it is today were taken by our daughter-in-law Marie-Dominique Verdier, wife of son Scott Kirby. Do is a professional photographer.



The location of the house on a gently sloping hillside provided for good drainage. The house is only a hundred feet from the cleanest, freshest, and coldest water to be found – true to this day. The creek abounds with small fish, frogs, and turtles, a wonderful play-place for little boys and girls.

The 50-acre woods on Benson Road was home to a log cabin, built in 1907 by my grandfather and great uncle, from trees harvested in what became known as the Kirby Kabin Woods. The modestly-wooded hilly acreage was a perfect pasture and grazing area for calves and heifers for many years. Water, shade, and plenty of grass were all that was needed to make young livestock comfortable and contented. The Kirby Kabin provided a place to gather for parties, meetings, retreats, and church services. The Kabin Woods hosted nearly 100,000 people for the 1950 National Plowing Matches.

Unfortunately, during the 1960s and 1970s, as more and more people became familiar with its location, the Kabin became a place for uninvited and/or unwanted visitors, and the result was theft and vandalism that was literally beyond repair. It was one of my greatest heartbreaks to be unable to save the Kabin from such destruction. We simply were not able to get ahead of the game. Many of

the authentic pioneer and Indian artifacts were stolen, though a few of them, along with some of the furnishings, are now scattered throughout our family.

The Kabin was a wonderful place, with a myriad of fond memories for at least five generations of my family. The stone fireplace and chimney remain as a reminder of good times past and many wonderful people who shared in those times. So may it also be, with the thoroughly refurbished farmhouse and barns that rest a quarter mile down the lane on the western edge of the farm, along the banks of Buck Creek, at the edge of Pretty Prairie. Let our country home once again be a happy and comfortable place for the gathering of family and friends.

The refurbishment of the buildings and grounds at the farm has been a fulfilling, albeit costly, project. It has also pleased me that the project has met with great approval and enthusiasm from our children and grandchildren. Those living closest have participated in some of the cleaning, painting, and general maintenance, and I believe that each of our children's families have spent several days and nights in the old farm house. Several have repeated their visits, and all have come to understand and appreciate the rustle of the leaves in the trees, the gurgling of Buck Creek, the abundance of wildlife in the woods – indeed, the ongoing miracles of Mother Nature. Where else can you stroll through your own 50 acres of woods, or paddle a canoe for a mile on your own waterway? And of course, where else can you get ticks on your dogs, mosquitoes when the wind isn't blowing, and poison ivy where you least expect it! Yes, there are also lessons to be learned.

And if you really get bored, you can stroll down the lane to the other house on the farm and visit with our closest neighbor. That would be 95-year-old Doris Jones, whose in-laws farmed this farm in the 1930's and 1940's, and whose husband farmed it during the 1950's and 1960's. Doris is of an age where she doesn't hear well, and her vision is somewhat lacking, but she can remember everything. Her long-term memory is totally intact; her short-term memory works as well as anyone's; and everything in between is still clear as a bell. She can regale you with reminiscences until the cows come home. The cows, however, will not be coming home soon. Sadly, the last of our Holsteins were shipped out several years ago, and today our farming is limited to the production of field crops.

The initial interest and enthusiasm of our children for the refurbishment of the farm not only pleased me, it also surprised me. Perhaps these kids are going to be okay after all. God knows we tried. But you just never know. What values and standards do they believe in, and live by? What is important to them and meaningful to them? What do they pass through to their children . . . and why? In a country now struggling with an abundance of leadership fraught with arrogance and greed, are our kids part of the problem, or will they be part of the solution?

Perhaps it is too early to tell, and perhaps like many parents, I really don't have a clue. But I can tell you this: I see their enthusiasm for the outdoors, for being around and staying in an old farm house with minimal amenities, and for playing games like horseshoes and badminton. I like to watch as their children swing from an old tire suspended by a rope from a tree limb, or roast marshmallows around a campfire as we sing the old songs and watch the setting sun over Pretty Prairie.

I like what I see, and I love them for it. Perhaps more importantly, I respect them because of it.

Neddie the imp ready for trouble.

Neddie enrolled early in Driver's Ed.

Wendy was a cute kid, too.

SMALL TOWN – MIDWEST – USA

The best place to grow up in the 20th Century? Small town, Midwest, USA. Just sort of has a nice ring to it, don't you think? Yep, I'm just a kid from a small town in the Midwest. Oh, you never heard of it? . . . Urbana . . . Urbana, Ohio. Just north of Springfield . . . west of Columbus about 40 miles.

Yeah, about 10,000 people – give or take. The county seat for Champaign County, Ohio, home town of such notables as the famous frontiersman, Indian fighter and General in the War of 1812, Simon Kenton; John Quincy Adams Ward, America's most noted sculptor during the 19th century, and General Robert L. Eichelberger, famous U.S. military leader during the Pacific campaign of World War II. Dad called him "Boog," but I never knew why. I met him at an Urbana High School Commencement shortly after the War. He was the commencement speaker, and Dad picked me up and held me high in front of the built-up stage after the exercises were finished, in order that I could meet my dad's old friend and shake his hand. That is one of my earliest childhood memories.

The Eichelberger home still stands in Urbana, at the far east end of Scioto Street, on the south side, where routes 29 and 36 split. It used to be the site of the Eichelberger farm, later to be purchased by Melvin Miller. Melvin was a true entrepreneur and astute business man, turning the entire farm into a fully developed residential area. He made the most of it, with the implementation of his fledgling excavation company and accompanying gravel pit. That entire east end of Urbana was surveyed, laid out, streets paved, sidewalks laid, and home basements dug by Melvin Miller and his crews. It was one of the great Horatio Alger stories of our community, and was capped by Melvin and his family becoming one of Urbana's greatest benefactors. Their familial generosity continues to this day.

I grew up at the west edge of Melvin's developments, living in two of the three Kirby homes at that end of town. My first Kirby residence was on the south side of Scioto Street at 601; it had a total of about five acres, including a 3-acre pasture to the south that went all the way back to Water Street. Through the middle of this pasture ran Dugan's Ditch, a meandering tiny stream with its headwaters just down Water Street on the south side at what is still known as the factory pond. Our house was bordered on the East by Patrick Avenue, often known as Willow Drive. The latter name resulted from the string of willow trees planted on both sides, all the way from Scioto Street to the north entrance of Oakdale Cemetery.

I remember Willow Drive well, when the willow trees were large and . . . willowy . . . forming a huge umbrella of shade completely across from one side to the other of Willow Drive. It is my understanding that the planting of those trees was done by the first mayor of Urbana, William Patrick, a distant relative, whose daughter Mary Ellen married John Kirby. That makes him something like my third great-grandfather on my father's side, probably once or twice removed, from something.

Willow Drive (Patrick Avenue) was, and still is, the final street to be traversed by nearly every resident of our community. It was that most lovely and scenic half-mile of street over which every funeral procession made its way to the final resting place at Oakdale Cemetery. Living right on the corner of Scioto Street and Patrick Avenue provided this little boy a fine view of the large black vehicle, always led by a police car, which was followed by dozens of private vehicles, each with a small funeral flag fluttering in the breeze, on their way to a place of permanent peace and tranquility. Whenever a funeral passed by on Scioto Street and turned right onto Willow Drive, everything else stopped. Traffic on both sides pulled over for the entire procession and drivers stepped out from their vehicles and stood as the procession passed, with heads bowed. The same was true of neighbors and

residents along the route who stopped what they were doing, faced the street, removed their hats and bowed their heads. You see, this was a small town. Everybody knew everybody. And besides, it was the proper thing to do. That's how we were taught.

Six hundred one Scioto Street was a large and lovely wooden structure where I lived until the end of World War II. Mom and Dad and I lived upstairs and the Rice family, "Uncle" Chick and "Aunt" Margaret, along with their children Phil and Sue, lived downstairs. In 1945, we moved across Scioto Street to 590 Scioto, where Uncle Bob and Aunt Essa had lived until Uncle Bob died, having outlived Aunt Essa by several years. Uncle Bob was really my great uncle, being the brother of my long deceased Grandfather Harry, father of my dad. This house was much smaller but plenty large enough for a family of three, with a smaller yard and several great big shade trees. I didn't really miss the old big house much, probably because I was only seven years old. My only strong memories were of my pony, Captain Luke, and the chickens we kept back in the old carriage house and horse barn, where I got to feed them and help gather eggs. I still got to see Captain Luke, because Dad had him moved out to the dairy farm, about six miles southeast of town on route 54. I also remember the expansive yard at 601, where the back yard included a grape arbor on both sides of a walkway, a large, open air "summer house," and a really big goldfish pond. The side yard to the east was large enough for a football field, with many large stately oaks and maples throughout. The property was purchased by a local businessman, Bob Howard, who extensively remodeled it into one of Urbana's true showplaces. It is now the main branch of Champaign National Bank.

The War was not quite over when we moved across the street, but that was really lucky for me. Just two doors to the west of our house lived "Uncle" Don Cone and his wife, "Aunt" Heapie. Uncle Don was owner of Cone Coal and Supply, and his coal yard and supply house were located on Miami Street along the east side of the railroad tracks belonging to the New York Central Railroad. (The New York Central was commonly known back then as the Big Four Railroad, but I never figured that one out either. Anyway, it's not important.) What is important is that Uncle Don was our street's official Air Raid Warden! TRUE! There was still a war going on, and while we never got bombed, at least in Urbana, by golly we were ready.

During a practice air raid, always at night, all the factory whistles would blow, the church bells would ring, and every light in town was to be turned off immediately. Uncle Don's job was to walk up and down Scioto Street, both sides, and walk up to houses where he could still see a light and remind them to turn it off. Well, would you believe it . . . Uncle Don decided he needed an assistant air raid warden, shortly after we moved across the street. Guess What! . . . he asked ME! WOW! For the remaining few months of the War, Scioto Street was well served during practice air raid drills by its Official Air Raid Warden and his ASSISTANT AIR RAID WARDEN. Uncle Don made me a little cardboard badge, and sometimes let me wear his official warden's hat. My job was to run up the sidewalk to those houses that had a forgotten light still on, knock on their door, and remind them to turn off their light. They were always quite responsive and did exactly as I told them. What a power trip! I should have gone into politics!

By the way, this was not all just fun and games. In the early part of the war, when German submarines were traversing our eastern coastal waters, the fear of German bombers was a real concern. Urbana was considered a potential primary target for the enemy because Grimes Manufacturing Company was located within our city limits. Grimes was the world's largest manufacturer of airplane lights and other aeronautical gadgets and gizmos. Knock out Grimes and the United States Army Air Corps would be badly crippled.

Oh, you think I made a typing error when I said "Army" Air Corps? Nope, that's the way it was at the beginning of World War Two. The United States Air Force became a separate entity later in the War. Do you know the song that starts out: "Off we go, into the wild blue yonder , flying high into the sky"? Well, if you sing this song to its conclusion, you will note that it ends with the final phrase, "Nothing can beat the Army Air Corps!" So there!

Meanwhile, back on Scioto Street in small town, Midwest, USA, the six blocks of Scioto Street from Monument Square to our house at 590 seemed like a long distance to travel. After all, Monument Square was all the way downtown. It was the center of everything, the core of the community and of all Champaign County. All the government buildings were within one block, as well as several churches. The Square included Urbana's only hotel, the Douglas, plus Ewing's Restaurant, Evan's Jewelry Store, Dick Kerr's Ice Cream Parlor, the Paradise Lunch restaurant, a barber shop, several upstairs law offices, and a number of retailers, including Uhlman's Department Store.

My first memory of the square was during the Second World War. My mother was in charge of war bond sales for Champaign County. Periodically there would be a War Bond Drive, complete with a rally and a lot of activities to entice people to gather in the square. Once they were gathered, my mother and her team of arm-twisters would descend upon their friends and neighbors, no doubt preaching patriotism, motherhood, and God almighty, coupled with thinly veiled guilt trips, all aimed towards selling a $25 War Bond to each newly anointed Patriot. (I think my mother got that chairmanship because she was outstanding in the guilt-trip category. I should know. Even though I was always a very good little boy, my mother liked to pick on me. Hey, those were tough times way back then.)

But let me tell you about my mother. She was the first of five children born to Philip and Edith Schneider. The family lived in the south half of a duplex that is still standing, the first house north of the railroad tracks on North Main Street, on the west side of the street. The back yard included the factory building for American Tool and Die Company, a venture jointly owned by my grandfather Philip and his business partner Percy Creighton. This was a family of German descent, and I am told my grandfather was a fairly stern, no-nonsense kind of guy. The only grandparent I was ever privileged to know was my grandmother Schneider, whose love and kindness no doubt was a wonderful counterbalance to her husband's strong Germanic sense of order and discipline. Between the two of them, they seemed to do the "kid thing" quite well.

They raised a daughter who was an activist when a woman's place was in the kitchen. Besides doing a "man's job" as Champaign County chairperson for war bonds, she also served as superintendent of the local Lutheran Church Sunday School and was the first woman elected to a board of education in the State of Ohio. She also was the rarest of rarest commodities, being one of only a few young women from Champaign County to attend college; she had been a student at Wittenberg College in Springfield, Ohio.

All four of her brothers attended college, and all of them happened to become members of Phi Kappa Psi Fraternity, as did my father. Grandfather Philip died from an early heart attack and two of his sons, Paul and Hugh, took over and ran the family business until each passed away from a heart attack. Their brother John, the "free spirit" of the group, being a writer, pursued a career in advertising in New York, and ultimately earned a vice presidency at the firm of Lennen and Mitchell of Madison Avenue fame. His slogan, "Not a cough in a carload," put Old Gold cigarettes on the map for several years. (Can you imagine such a slogan being used today?) Uncle John ultimately became weary of the Madison Avenue rat race, moved to Rhode Island, and wrote a book. *The Golden Kazoo* was

successfully published and was purchased for a Broadway production by famed producer Kermit Bloomgarden. Unfortunately, Uncle John's untimely heart attack threw a wrench into the works and the *Kazoo* never made it to the bright lights of Broadway.

Uncle Earl also graduated from Wittenberg, went on to law school, achieved the highest score ever on the Ohio Bar Exam, and became the leading attorney in the high-powered Cleveland law firm of Thompson, Hine and Flory. Earl was the only one of the five children to live a reasonably full life span. My mother also suffered from heart disease, but her strength of will and good old German discipline made her the perfect patient. During her lengthy illness, she was a patient of Dr. Page, whose early work with experimental drugs and therapy programs brought his work to the pinnacle of the famed Cleveland Clinic, and his picture onto the cover of *Time* magazine. Dr. Page and Mom were quite the team. He was the brilliant research physician, and she was the disciplined patient. He knew that whatever he told her to do would be done perfectly. For years, I took her blood pressure twice a day, at the exact same time in the morning and afternoon. No exceptions. Everything from blood pressure numbers to medications were duly recorded in her log, including dosage level, pressure numbers, time, date, and so forth. The same was done with her diet and activity levels. All of this was reviewed during mom's quarterly visits with Dr. Page at the Clinic. It went on for years, as Dr. Page would make a change here and tweak something there, as his mind worked continuously in his battle against this horrible disease. Mom's commitment was equally as strong as she fought the same battles, every bit as valiantly. They made progress, albeit inch by inch, and Dr. Page's work and conclusions are still the basis for the ongoing battle against heart disease today. I am confident that Dr. Page's work, in conjunction with mom's discipline and great will to live, lengthened her time with us by several years. Although she was increasingly bedridden during her final years, her mind and spirit continued to fight the good fight. We lost her at the age of 56.

Five hundred ninety Scioto Street was just one of about a dozen houses on our side of the block; a similar number were on the south side. I knew everybody who lived in each of those twenty-four or so houses. Hardly anyone ever moved into or out of the neighborhood. Everyone always seemed to have the same job, always attended the same church, their kids all grew up in just one house, and the house paint never changed colors. Directly behind our house, across the alley, was a garage that had been converted into a tiny grocery store. It was owned by Tom O'Brien, and its name was the Cottage Grocery. He lived in the adjoining house with his wife, and they were the only staff for that store, every hour of every day, year around. They had everything in it and knew exactly where everything was located. That included fresh produce and fresh meats. They were delightful people, the kind of folks you would still shop with even if Wal-Mart moved in next door. They were just like all the rest of the adults in the neighborhood. Everyone was a surrogate parent. The O'Brien's had no children of their own, so I think they may have taken a little too much interest in me. I remember one particular episode which will go down into the category of life's lessons learned.

I was about eight years old, and Mom had sent me over to the store for some hamburger. I arrived at the store counter and told Mr. O'Brien that mom wanted a pound of hamburger. Like I said, everything was fresh. That included freshly ground hamburger. While Mr. O'Brien ground the meat, I surveyed the countertop. Sure enough, the bubble gum bowl was still there, loaded to the brim with individually wrapped one-penny-sized packages. Mr. O'Brien was still grinding away, with his back to me. That bowl looked way too full of bubble gum, almost spilling over.

Perhaps I could help lighten its load. Faster than greased lightning, five of those pieces jumped right into my pocket. Mr. O'Brien was now at the counter with the wrapped meat. I gave him mom's money, saying nothing about the bubble gum. Well, heck, he didn't say anything either. So he must

not have seen me. I was out the door with the meat, walking home with a bulge of five bubble gums in my pocket. "Hi, mom; here's the hamburger." Mom answered, "Mr. O'Brien just called me on the phone and told me that his bubble gum bowl is short five pieces of gum. Do you know anything about that?" . . . pause . . . . . more pause . . . . . real damn long pause. "Uh yes. I think they might be in my pocket." "Show me," she said. ("How could he possibly know it was five pieces?" I am thinking.) I showed her three. "Is that all?" "No ma'am. Here's the other two." Mom then said, "Here is a nickel; take it back to the store and apologize to Mr. O'Brien."

Boy, was that a long walk. I finally got to the door of the store. I opened it slowly and quietly. He was facing the opposite way. In a millisecond I was over to the counter, the nickel was placed on the counter, and I was rapidly retreating out the door. "NEDDIE", said Mr. O'Brien. "Do you have something to say to me?" "Uh, yes, sir." "What is that?" "I'm sorry." And now I was out the door. I never knew grocery store owners had eyes in the back of their heads. But now I'm a believer. Never again. Just retelling this story puts a knot in my stomach. I'm sorry! I'm sorry!

The alley was more than just a place behind our house for cars to get to their garages. It was a great place to ride bikes, play tag, and race most anything, including each other. At the other end of the alley lived the Vance and Katherine Brand family, with daughters Louise and Dixie and younger sons Joe and Vance. Joe is one year older than me and Vance is two years younger. I continue to keep in touch with both Joe and Vance, although sometimes I wonder why. I think Vance still carries a grudge, simply because Joe and I didn't treat him very well sometimes. Well, tough. He was always a troublemaker and got what he deserved. His brother told me so.

His brother Joe, on the other hand, being a year older, was a bad influence on me . . . and still is. I mean, he IS a Democrat! But back then, things were so much simpler. A simple foot race the length of the alley was great fun. So were bike races. And other variations of racing were sometimes creative and always fun. Case in point: one warm summer evening Joe and I were plotting something against Vance, but our minds somehow diverted to alley racing, after dark. First race in the dark was finished and it was a ho-hum. Okay, let's race with no shirts. It really was still warm outside. Hey, that was fun. So whadda you think about just shoes and underpants? (I still think this was Joe's idea, but he swears innocence. And since he is now a lawyer, he must be telling the truth. Right? RIGHT?!) So we raced in our shoes and skivvies. Now that was fun. Hey, how about one more race? Okay? Well, what was it gonna be; shoes off or underpants off? Easy decision . . . it was a gravel alley. Alley stones were too tough on the piggies, especially for the entire 200 yards. Off came the drawers. "On your mark, get set, GO!" Two bare-ass boys made it all the way down and back, without getting caught. We were so proud. And even today, when Joe and I review that episode, we both want to take credit for the fact that we were probably the world's first . . . STREAKERS!

It was within the past year that Joseph L. Brand informed me that he only played with me in those early years at his own peril. I asked him, "How so?" His answer was that his mother told him that I was "a naughty little boy." Can you believe it? The great times that we had, and now that we're both in our seventies, he unloads that trip on me. Typical damn Democrat! You'll never hear him tell you that it was his idea to try throwing some of Dixie and Louise's doll babies out the window of the house. Boy, was that a bad scene. Aunt Katherine was one unhappy mother. Even so, it wasn't too bad until we tried some from the second-floor window. However, we pushed it a little far when we went up another story and pitched a couple out of the small window in what was known as the "Witch's Tower." Do you know how far a doll baby can fly when it starts from three stories up?

Family, friends, neighbors, and a time of innocence: when you put all of those into a small town in the Midwest of this great land of ours, it just doesn't get much better than that.

Ned and his friends, ready for anything:
Hobe Neiswander, Ned, Jim Bills, Larry Martin

LIFE'S MEMORABLE MOMENTS

Unlike some people I know, I cannot remember every golf shot I ever took in every tournament in which I have played. On the other hand, I have never played in a golf tournament, and most of my golf shots are better forgotten anyway. I can, however, remember every wedding and funeral at which I have sung, and every note I have flubbed, and every word I have missed. My wedding repertoire is rather limited in that I am not comfortable doing some of the contemporary stuff that is occasionally requested by younger couples. I have even thought about cutting a CD with my mostly sacred music; I would title it "Music for Celebration and Inspiration." My original idea for a title was "Music for Marryin' and Buryin'," but you-know-who nixed that great idea.

I have been honored to sing at many weddings for family and friends, and for their children, and increasingly more for funerals as the years pass. Each occasion has been memorable and special, but the one at the top of my list was neither a wedding nor a funeral. It was a christening.

It was over a decade ago, but it is as fresh in my mind as though it were yesterday. The christening took place in a small village in the south of France, Villefranche, near Albi. It is the family hometown of our son Scott's wife, Marie-Dominique Verdier. The family home/farm is still there, and Do's grandmother still resided there at the time. The child to be baptized was Scott and Do's first-born, Sara Helene Kirby, and the celebrant was a Catholic priest and old friend of the family.

Villefranche was a small village with no traffic lights and only one stop sign. The stop sign was at the center of the village, at the town's only crossroad. A small plaza was located at the edge of the town square, and next to the plaza was the Roman Catholic cathedral. Now in France, this was just a normal-sized small-town church, but for our small towns it would be considered a cathedral. The immense wooden front doors opened into a large sanctuary that was both deep and high, with a vaulted ceiling and lovely stained glass windows. The altar and pulpit areas had the normal complement of altar cloths, ornate crosses, candelabra and silver chalices. Most everything else was rather Spartan, including hard wooden pews, poor lighting, stone flooring, and an incredibly "live" acoustic sound. Oh, yes, the piano needed a little tuning.

It was a bright, sunny, and comfortably warm Sunday morning as the family gathered at grandmother's farm home. The farm was at the edge of town, and the buildings were well suited to a large family gathering. The large two-story farmhouse could sleep several of the families, and the four-sided barn lot was surrounded by barn structures on the remaining three sides. One was a cattle shed, another was for hay storage, and the third was a double-decker that had been converted into a guest area and small studio. The barn lot itself had been converted into the family's own little courtyard, complete with a small fountain as the focal point in the middle. The rest of the lot had been decorated appropriately for the occasion, with several picnic tables and a few dozen chairs completing the setting.

Wendy and I were staying at a nearby motel, the only one in town, which consisted of six small rooms on the second floor above the town's only bar and small restaurant. We knew the bartender by his first name by the time we left.

Wendy and I walked a couple of short blocks to the assembly area, opened the barn door, and walked into an assemblage of fifty or so family members. I had no idea where they all came from, and more importantly, where they were all staying. Apparently, the French take their christenings very seriously. There were four generations in attendance, and they were all in a mood to celebrate. How neat.

The morning church services at the cathedral were now complete, it was about high noon, and it was time for the christening. Scott and Do and sweet baby Sara led the assemblage right down the middle of the only main street in the village. I mean the middle! And baby Sara was dressed in a christening gown that flowed from her father's arms to about a foot above the street. It was a gorgeous white gown, with fine embroidery, Chantilly lace, and a veil to complete the ensemble. The French know how to do this stuff.

Friends and neighbors stuck their heads out windows, or waved, or shouted a greeting. We reached the town plaza, turned right, and entered through the large doorway into the main sanctuary. At this juncture, I cannot offer details, because it was all in French. Nonetheless, I am certain that everything was done correctly, according to the Pope. They chanted some Gregorian-sounding stuff, blew a little smoke, did the water bit, and voila, sweet baby Sara is baptized. This part of the service was concluded with Scott playing his own composition on the piano, a number he wrote for his daughter especially for this occasion.

We all then moved as a group to a side altar, still in the same sanctuary, dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Scott moved over to the bench at the church's huge pipe organ. He filled the church with the opening strains of Schubert's "Ave Maria." With little Sara held by the priest at the altar of the Virgin Mary, I stood near the altar and began to sing the "Ave Maria." I sang it in Latin, which I believe is a reasonable compromise between French and English. I am seldom nervous at these times, but I admit to being fairly emotional for this most special of occasions. Scott accompanied beautifully. The organ and the voice blended well, and the sound filled the sanctuary of this wonderful house of God. The adrenalin was really pumping. As we had rehearsed it, both Scott and I put the closing measures into a slow decrescendo, ending ever so softly and delicately on the final two words of Schubert's most well-known work . . . . "Ave . . .Maria."

It went well. I smiled a slight smile and headed toward my seat in the congregation. Spontaneously, the family erupted into applause, and it became a standing ovation. I was embarrassed. I was back in my seat, and the ovation continued. It was most flattering, and it reinforced my feelings that the French are really very nice people. A little later, as Scott and I were walking together back to the farmhouse, I told him that it was the first time I ever received applause in a church. I will never forget Scott's reply. He answered, "Don't worry about it. They probably had real low expectations."

Well, burst my bubble!

Meanwhile, back at grandmother's farm, the celebration was in full swing. There was a cafeteria table already laden with food. Wine was flowing freely. Out came the guitars. Music took over the conversation, and everyone was singing French folk songs. Some we recognized and joined in. Others, we just faked. I did, however, learn another lesson which apparently is valid worldwide. The more wine you drink, the better you can sing. It was now about two in the afternoon. Wendy and I lasted until about ten that night. When we left at ten, we were the first to leave! At no time was there ever any hint of a diminishing food supply, or a lack of wine. Both seemed to taste better and better as the day wore on. And of course, the singing only got better and better. Some might say louder

and louder, but we never received any complaints from the neighbors. I guess that might be because they were all at the celebration.

This was a truly moving and religious celebration. I even believe there might have been a small miracle associated with this wonderful family gathering. The miracle? There was not a single hangover the next morning. And now you know what makes for a very special occasion, at least in our family. My personal experience has been that many of "Life's Memorable Moments" do, indeed, often relate to the bursting of one's bubble. Perhaps that is why many of life's memorable moments are also "Life's Lessons Learned."

Case in point: I was in the sixth grade at Central Ward School in Urbana. The sixth grade was the first year that students could participate in the National Spelling Bee competition. It was a competition for sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-graders, and included a march through contests at the local, county, state and national levels. The competition consisted of written tests followed by oral testing, quite similar to how it is still done today. The finalists for all competition levels are lined up, with each having a word pronounced to them by the moderator. It is a single elimination contest, up to the final two contestants. At that point, if either misses a word, the other finalist must not only spell that word but also spell the next word correctly.

During my sixth-grade year, I happened to come in second in the Urbana School System, finishing behind an eighth grader, Patty Howell. (How can I remember that when I can't even remember what I had for lunch today?) It was my first year of competition, so I didn't think much about it. Well, apparently my parents did. A couple of months prior to the next year's contest, my parents obtained some competition-type spelling books, and I was having words pronounced to me almost daily. It came time for the Urbana Spelling Bee, and I happened to win the local competition. This victory qualified me for the state-wide contest held in Columbus, where winners are gathered from around Ohio to determine the state champion and Ohio's designated representative to the national finals in Washington.

The state finals were a couple months down the road, so it was time to get serious about this. Parents, aunts and uncles, family friends, and even a couple of junior high teachers were pronouncing words and giving definitions. They seemed to be following me just about everywhere I happened to be . . . or so I thought. After a couple of fairly intense months, I felt well prepared. I was ready! But then what did I know? This would be my first time competing at the state level, and I was really excited. I kept waiting for the Urbana schools to give us a time and date, telling us when and where to be in Columbus. The wait went on for what seemed an unusual period of time.

Then it happened. I was reading the Columbus *Dispatch* one afternoon after school, and back somewhere in section B, third page, there was a story about the State of Ohio Spelling Bee Finals. Only it was in past tense. It had already happened. The winner had been determined, and arrangements were now being made for his trip to Washington. Dad soon arrived home after work that day, and I asked him about the story in the *Dispatch* in section B. He read it and got a little red in the face. He asked mom about it. She knew nothing and had heard nothing. He called the school superintendent at home almost immediately, and the superintendent said that he would get right on it in the morning. (Back then, that's how it worked in a small town.) The superintendent actually called back later that same evening to acknowledge that there had been a major screw-up and we had not been notified. All was lost, at least for that year. The superintendent assured us that he would personally take care of all this next year. Of course, that promise meant nothing if I was unable

to win again at the local level. Moreover, the experience gained from competing at the state level this year would have likely been valuable for the competition the following year.

One year passed, and I was deluged with people willing to work with me in preparation for this, my final year of eligibility in the Spelling Bee competition. Fortunately, I was able to win again in Urbana, and during the ensuing weeks, I believe the Urbana Superintendent of Schools became my father's closest personal friend. At least they certainly seemed to be communicating a lot. This time, we knew well in advance when and where to be in Columbus.

As I recall, there were a little more than a hundred contestants, and that number was halved through the written tests given in the morning. That afternoon was the finals, and they were oral and single elimination. One miss and you're out. All went well for the first several rounds, and it was now down to the final sixteen. I remember that it was televised live and the pronouncer was the well-known news anchor from Cincinnati, Peter Grant. My turn came up in the Sweet Sixteen round; my word was "gossamer." I had not studied this word, but I thought I could sound it out. I asked for a definition, which gave no help at all. Well, no sense in stalling; let's get on with it. "G O S S (pause) I M E R." Buzz goes the buzzer. I missed it. Go sit down.

Was I disappointed? Of course – but not devastated. I had worked hard and given it my best shot. It was a great experience and a learning experience. I learned about concentration and focus. I learned about how to deal with pressure and other people's expectations. I learned that screw-ups, even those not of your own making, are not the end of the world. And in the end, I learned to spell a heckuva lot of words that I have never used again in my entire life! (And of course, many that I have used.)

And so it was, after all was said and done, just another one of "Life's Lessons Learned."

FATHER TO SON

When our son Ned was in high school, he played football for Urbana High School. At the end of his final season, the local paper reprinted an editorial I wrote for the Urbana High School *Boosters Club Bulletin*, of which I was then editor and publisher, following in my father's footsteps. I believe my dad might have been proud of this editorial, just as I was proud of my son.

Father to Son

(The following was written by Ned Kirby and published in the Urbana Booster Club newsletter. It's a father's comments to his son at the end of the football season.

Any father with a son playing football or any boy playing football will readily understand the comments.)

"Son, as you take the field for your final game tonight, I want you to know how proud I have been of you during your high school football career. I have enjoyed sharing your moments of triumph and your times of despair. I have taken satisfaction in replaying portions of my youth through your efforts. I am appreciative of the associations that you have made with coaches, team members, and opponents, many of which will last a lifetime.

"I believe in the high school football experience and I am pleased that you were able to share in that experience. I believe it is important for young men to share the experience of a team effort; to learn to get back up when you have been knocked down; to test your will and desire against great odds; to develop a self-discipline in difficult situations.

"These are all lessons of football . . . they are also lessons of life. While you must learn the lessons of the classroom, there are certain values taught best on the field of competition.

"As you gather in your team huddle tonight for your pre-game prayer, remember, just for a moment, that the old man is still with you; watching, enjoying, swelling with pride just a bit, and being a little sentimental as you play your final game. Good luck, son."

Two generations of our family at our retirement party in 2006, with everyone present except our French-born daughter-in-law, wife of son Scott, Marie-Dominique Verdier, Sadly, Do was under the weather that weekend; plus I think she didn't want to drink any American wine.

FAMILY

I know I have mentioned elsewhere that my greatest regret in life is that I never knew my parents in an adult relationship. My mother passed away when I was 21 and my father when I was 24 years old. As the years have passed, I have become increasingly aware of the impact they had upon my life, even though our time was sadly shortened.

At the time of their passing I was still a young man in a hurry. I knew a lot about a lot of things, or so I thought, and I had important stuff to do – or so I thought. I am now certain that they probably viewed me with a combination of amusement and bemusement as I went about my self-assigned tasks. Oh, of course, I gave them things of which to be proud, and shared moments with them of laughter and sorrow. And so it is that, during the interim years, I have often thought of how it might have been if they were still here, or had been with me for just another decade or two, or year or two.

Isn't it sad that they never knew any of our children or grandchildren? They never were able to dance at a single wedding of their grandchildren, or to hold a single great-grandchild in their arms. More personally, they were not here to advise, counsel, plead, cajole, and reprimand as I went through life making a myriad of adult decisions. Certainly I have been blessed with many advisors and role models along the way, often friends and families of my parents. But my parents knew me the best and loved me the most. They should have been here.

I wonder if this is the catalyst for my strong feelings and beliefs about the strength and importance of family and parenting. I wonder if this is why I probably over-communicate (meddle?) more than I should in my children's affairs. Our children's average age is now about 40, and they are a terrific bunch. I love them all. More significantly, I like them all. And I love each of their spouses, sometimes more than I love them. Well, maybe only sometimes. And above all else, I am overwhelmed with gratitude and feel blessed beyond belief that we have thirteen wondrous grandchildren. To be a part of their lives, to watch them grow and mature, and to remember how it was with our own children, is the icing on the cake. I now understand the great wisdom of whomever it was who advised us not to kill our children when they were teenagers, so they could give us grandchildren.

I wish they all lived a bit closer than they do now. We have scattered them from Wisconsin to Idaho to Florida. Only those in Indiana and Ohio pass the proximity test. Perhaps this is why we have attempted to have a home in Indiana and a farm in Ohio, where we have tried to provide a pair of playgrounds for adults and children alike. Mema and Poppy's places need to be better than Disney World, Cedar Point, and King's Island, all rolled into one. And then, once we get them here, we can really screw them up!

In the years that Wendy and I have been parenting together, now numbering thirty-two, we have worked hardest at one specific goal. That goal was, and continues to be, to blend two families of three children each into one family of six children. I hope we have had some success in this area, and I believe we have. When we gather together periodically, it is wondrous to watch the interaction between families, amongst our children, and above all else, between the thirteen cousins.

While all is not perfect nor always wonderful, I believe they really like one another. I believe they love and support as a family should, and yes, at long last, they have even learned how to share. Well, maybe not quite yet with those cousins under the age of six. I guess the proof of the pudding is that each of our six families has demonstrated wonderful parenting during difficult challenges. They have made the right decisions, executed their programs professionally, and demonstrated the strong instincts of their nurturing and intensity of their love, just like we hoped they would do.

We have had some miracles in our family, challenges that have been met and dealt with as well as a parent can do. I remember when Scott and Do gave birth to Sara. She was a preemie and came into this world at a not-very-robust 2lbs. 15 oz. Scott could hold her in the palm of his hand and described her as a princess telephone with appendages. In spite of recent health issues, Sara is today a twelve-year-old, full of life, of normal physical size, very bright, and gifted in the field of music. She has thrived through superior parenting. Kristin and Kevin have worked wonders with their Kristopher, who is autistic but has benefitted greatly from the loving and caring family he lives with. Both parents and his brother and sister all participate in what can only be described as remarkable progress. Ned and Rochelle's youngest daughter, Sabrina, is today a thriving eight-year-old, having suffered and progressed through years of intensive medical treatments, as they have attacked ongoing problems of allergies and infections, largely the result of a deficient immune system. Only the great due diligence of their parenting has kept them ahead in this difficult game.

Poppy reading the only real man's page of the paper to grandson Ryan.

Granddaughter Julie practicing her best acting skills. (She entered Ohio State this year as a music and theater major.)

Grandson Max is filling the gas tank of one of Daddy Gregg's race cars. The fact that he is doing so with an air hose makes no difference at all.

Granddaughter Sara has just completed her final chemo treatment for Hodgkin's lymphoma. Prognosis is very positive. In the meantime, she has learned to paint her own head, using a mirror and brushes. It is obvious that her spirit is unbroken and her attitude is as strong as her prognosis.

And my, how our grandchildren can reach out and touch us. Gregg and Gina's little Ava is a tough kid. At the age of five, she has survived numerous scrapes and bruises, is fearless behind the wheel of a miniature go-kart, and simply shrugs off a dog bite to her cheek. Yet she can cuddle with the best of them. But for stark and unbridled reaching out, I give you three-year-old Benjamin, younger son of Eric and Laura.

With retirement, Wendy and I now have more time for travel and visiting with this gang that now numbers 25 in total. Our Christmas card group pictures are second only to the Nicklaus's with their 21 grandchildren, and those of the Jim Chronleys. Few of you know Jim, but he was one of my all-time favorites with Taco Bell. He was Vice-President for Growth and Development, and his honesty and integrity were a model for all of us. He is a devout Catholic and lives his life based upon the teachings of the Bible. When the good Lord told Jim to "go forth and multiply," he took that quite seriously. Perhaps that is why he was in charge of growth for Taco Bell. He truly practiced what he preached!

(Oops, I think I digressed a little.) At any rate, while we are still feeling our way into this retirement phase of our lives, we are finding time that we didn't previously have, a means to get from point A to point B, and an agenda that readily lends itself to being able to now share and laugh with our children and nurture and laugh at our grandchildren.

Our children no longer need our nurturing. They have all done quite well in the nurturing game. Each couple has developed into quite special parents. Certainly, parenting styles and philosophies vary, but they have learned from their roots, from all of their parents, and have had the judgment and wisdom to select what they deem as best practices. Their children show the results. Are there times when I would have done it differently? You bet. Have I nearly bitten my tongue off trying to keep my big mouth shut? Far too often. But do you know what is neat? When I do offer a suggestion or a little advice, they listen, respectfully, and even sometimes responsively. Then when I am done, they are courteous enough to wait until I have left, and then simply go ahead and do exactly what they had already intended. It's a great system. I learned it when I thought I was in charge at Kirby Hatcheries and KirTac!

At the bottom line, Wendy and I are incredibly blessed. All of our children have good health, a means of supporting those for whom they are responsible, and a collection of their own children, who are being raised with solid values, great role models, and a sense of caring parents and loving families, just like Wendy and I were privileged to have.

In my lifetime, I have been involved in the production of chickens and turkeys, and tacos and burritos. But rest assured, above anything else, bar none, Wendy's and my greatest achievement – the legacy of which we are most proud – is our children, and our children's children.

After 16 years of classical music training, and an education from Ohio State and Oxford Universities, son Scott is walking to work on the first day of his first "real job."

Daughters-in-law Laura, Gina, and Megan arrive at our retirement party, ready to party.

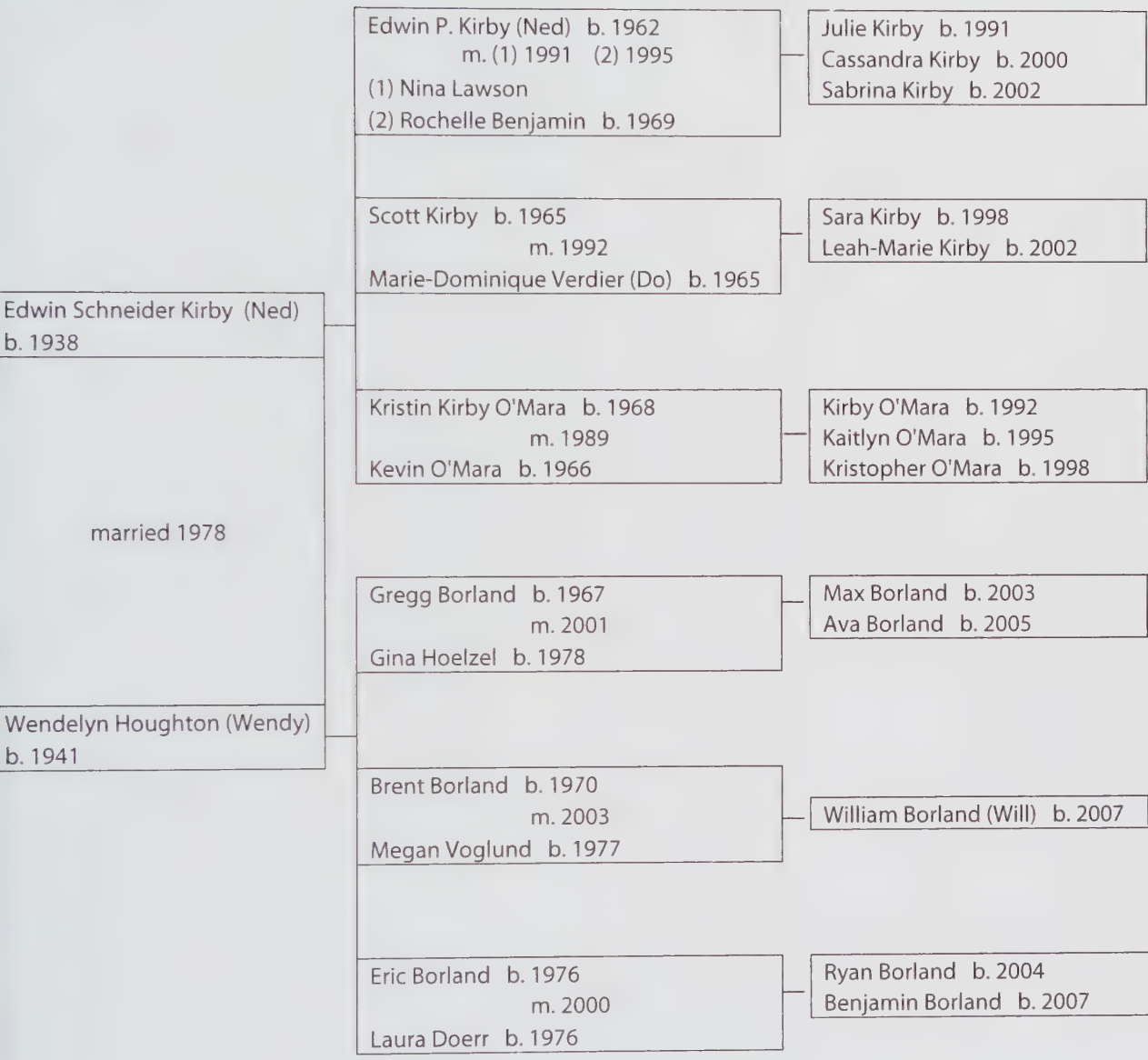
Wendy's three sons, Brent, Gregg, and Eric, never did agree on much of anything.

Sisters-in-law Kristin Kirby O'Mara and Megan Borland doing their best to act mature.

Daughter Kristin is directing the band with her feet, in order not to spill a drop from the drink in her left hand.

Daughter-in-law Megan, trying to keep up with the Old Man.

THE FAMILY OF NED AND WENDY KIRBY



Sable, with the red collar, and Shadow, with the blue.

SABLE AND SHADOW

Those two names, just by themselves, create instant recognition in all of our children, some of our grandchildren, many of our friends, and a lot of our business associates. Sable and Shadow were a major part of our lives for fourteen years; they were with us nearly every day, on vacation trips, journeys to Ohio, boat cruising, and to and from the office daily, where they would trot right into my office and place themselves in their customary position on the small couch in the corner. From there,

they could survey the parking lot for newcomers to check out, still keeping an eye open down the hallway, apparently so as to supervise the entire office staff.

Shadow and Sable were standard-sized black French poodles. They were litter-mates, Sable being the female and Shadow the male. Shadow outweighed his sister, tipping the puppy scales at about 55 pounds; Sable was usually 48-50 pounds. Shadow was bigger, but make no mistake about it, Sable was in charge. She was the "A" dog, a natural leader, fully confident in any situation, and more than happy to boss him around. In other words, it was a typical male-female relationship.

It also probably made some difference that we acquired Sable first. After much research and study, Wendy made our decision. Yep, that's the way it was. I was happy to have a dog, mostly thinking in terms of the barnyard and junkyard dogs I had become familiar with on our own farms and those farms of the many customers and business associates I called on during my traveling and selling days with Kirby Hatcheries. When Wendy announced her choice of a *poodle*, I am sure I cringed and uttered a minor expletive or two. A *poodle*? One of those gangly-legged critters with the huge hairballs all over their bodies . . . and RIBBONS in their hair? No way! (I lost.) So Wendy checked out breeders and kennels and soon came home with this little black, curly, tail-wagging, face-licking bundle of joy. She was named Sable because she looked like the sable fur coat that Wendy never got – or something logical like that. Note: these two poodles never were trimmed in the hairball style. They had a normal-dog-looking haircut all their lives. No weirdoes in our family!

Sable was smart as a whip, curious about everything and wanting to please all the time. Wendy took her to obedience school, where she was smarter than all the other puppies (just like our grandchildren in kindergarten), got all A's, and came home fully prepared to train the rest of us in how we were to treat her. She had all the basic moves of "Sit," "Down," "Stay," and "Roll Over," and Brent even taught her "Dead Dog." Strangely, we were never able to teach her to make a distinction between her dog food and human food in the kitchen. It seems as though when no one else was present, everything was free game. See, she did train us – she taught us how to secure our own kitchen – most of the time.

Enter the Encyclopedia Salesman. As I remember it, we had gotten talked into visiting with one of those door-to-door encyclopedia salesmen, the kind who make an appointment at your home for after dinner and show up in a dark suit and polished shoes. He probably also sold cemetery plots in the same outfit. So Wendy, son Eric, myself, and the peddler are gathered around the kitchen table and he is about halfway through his presentation (yawn). Enter Sable, our darling French poodle, who naturally is introduced to the book peddler. They shake hands, almost, and then Sable proceeds to puke on his nice shiny shoes. Oops: bad doggie. She pukes again, in the same vicinity, and again and again. It's all big and chunky and chocolate brown in color. (Like the description?) Chocolate brown? Oh no! Sable has gotten into the freshly baked pan of brownies that are (were) cooling in the pantry. Rush to pantry: empty, I mean empty, brownie pan. Chocolate is deadly to dogs, so we give her a huge dose of whatever you use to make dogs puke. She pukes more . . . lovely. We clean up the kitchen.

Mr. Peddler is just sitting there through all of this. Of course, he is thinking there is no way they will not buy an entire encyclopedia, cash deal, on the spot. He is right. As it turns out, I think Sable may have read more of the encyclopedia than did Eric.

It was about a year and a half after we brought Sable home that Wendy received a phone call from the breeder. The breeder was aware of our love and devotion for Sable and knew that she had done

obedience school and was, in every sense, a well-adjusted and well-taken-care-of puppy. It was with that knowledge that she asked Wendy if she would be interested in adopting one of Sable's littermates. The breeder proceeded to describe to my bleeding-heart wife the circumstances that had led her to making this call.

It seems as though Shadow had been bought by another couple who were not prepared, and who also were not much interested in owning a dog. He went home with them as a puppy, only to be banished to an outside dog run, fed only occasionally, never groomed, and seldom loved. Not a pretty picture. The breeder told Wendy that if she would take him, there would be no fee. She did not mention that he would need to be bathed, receive his first grooming, be de-loused, de-ticked, de-mited, de-wormed, and so forth. Two hundred and forty dollars later, we had a companion for Sable.

Wendy loaded Shadow into our car and brought him home for everyone to see. Because he had never been groomed in a year and a half, his hair had grown to 16 inches. He was therefore shorn all over, down to his skin. Because of his only sporadic feeding his scrawny body was barely half the size he should have been. He looked absolutely pathetic. Because he had very little human contact, he was poorly socialized and lacked even the most basic skills common to a year-and-a-half-old dog. For example, he didn't know how to get out of the car, nor how to navigate the two steps from our hallway to our living room. He was very nervous, shy, and unsure of himself. He was barely curious and less than adventuresome. That was all about to change.

Sable saw us help him down the two living room steps. Her eyes got big as saucers, her tail went into overdrive, and you know she was thinking, "Wow, they brought me a life-sized toy!" Let the fun and games begin. Sable sniffs; Shadow just stands; Sable's tail is wagging off; Shadow's is between his legs; Sable is bouncing and jumping all around; Shadow is not moving. And that was the beginning of a relationship that bonded two of God's creatures, until only death could part them.

It was ironic that Shadow came to us with the name of "Shadow." Indeed, that became his mission for life. He was Sable's shadow. He did everything she did, went everywhere she went, ran, sniffed, jumped, chased a ball, but always just a little behind his role model. Oh, he wanted to do it all, but his lack of confidence was more than he could sometimes overcome. He never could beat her in retrieving anything, and he was always afraid of the water, even when Sable would jump into the ocean's surf to retrieve. She was always top dog, and he was the world's happiest second fiddle.

Some of Shadow's more memorable exploits were around and in water, usually in that order. We often took the dogs on our long boating cruises, so they traveled with us around the Great Lakes, into Canada, and along the East Coast of the United States. However, Shadow's first escapade with water was right in our backyard on Morse Lake in Noblesville , Indiana. Son Brent was doing some type of yard activity when Sable came up to him, barked at him, and started to run in the opposite direction. Brent is a slow learner, so Sable did the same thing a couple of more times. Finally, Brent got the message and followed Sable around to the side of the house and down to the seawall. There was Shadow, in the water, struggling to climb the seawall. How he got into the water only Sable knew, and she never told us.

When on our boat, Sable never had any difficulty jumping the usual one-foot span from a dock to the walkway on the boat. Not so with Shadow. The six-foot drop to the water, through that narrow one-foot space, was like a magnet to Shadow. I fished him out of the waters of Florida, Chesapeake Bay, and twice at Mackinac Island. No wonder he was spooked about boarding the boat. However, in rough seas, he instinctively knew where to find the smoothest ride. You could always find him curled

in a ball, as far to the stern as he could get, and right in the middle of the boat. Sable was usually there with him.

Otherwise, it was always Shadow following Sable. The classic "follow the leader" episode occurred on their first visit to our dairy farm in Ohio. I thought it would be a nice idea to take them with me and turn them loose to run free for a short while over the 320 acres of fields, woods, and barn complex. I knew the farm had several mongrel cross-bred dogs, but hey, dogs are dogs. We pulled into the lane, drove back to the farmhouse, parked the car, and opened the car door for the dogs. Sable and Shadow jumped out and were almost immediately greeted by the welcoming committee of three really scruffy, been-through-the-war-zone, barnyard dogs. I was beginning to think this might not be such a good idea. Barks began to change to growls and snarls. Teeth were now being bared. It looked like a classic three on two, and the two were French. You just knew they were destined to be losers. It's in the DNA. Well, Sable took no crap from anyone. She started to snarl right back. Shadow thought that was cool, and he did likewise. Now it was really starting to get ugly. We were past the sniffing-of-various-body-parts stage and into lunging and nipping at one another. I was thinking about my story for Wendy when I brought home two dead poodles. The noise level and activity increased to a crescendo, and then began to subside. Some how, the whoosy-looking, city-slicker female French poodle had managed to assume her normal leadership role and was now head of the pack of all five dogs. Shadow thought that was REALLY cool. The five of them began to play and run around, and I was comfortable that all was well. Not quite so.

This was a working dairy farm. It had livestock, large equipment, mucho manure, and for the benefit of the dairy cattle, electric fence. The operative word here is *electric*. This was the fence that had three strands of heavy wire, about two feet between strands, and enough juice flowing through it to bring a 1600 pound dairy cow to its knees. The barnyard dogs already knew this, probably from past experience. The poodles didn't have a clue. So it was that Sable, as the leader of the group, decided it would be nice if they all ran down the short hill to the nearby pasture and visited the group of heifers that happened to be just on the other side of the *ELECTRIC* fence.

With that, Sable took off down the hill with Shadow in his customary position a few paces behind. The other three dogs didn't budge. They knew what was about to happen. They weren't barnyard dogs for nothing. I'm sure I heard a snicker or two from them as they anxiously awaited the frying of the uninitiated. I saw what was about to happen and hollered at Sable and Shadow, but Sable's mind was made up and that was good enough for Shadow. Sable was now in full stride and the fence was just a few feet ahead of her. She saw the two-foot space between the bottom and middle wire, timed her leap perfectly, cleared both wires and landed in the pasture, followed closely and identically by Shadow. I glanced towards the three barn dogs. Their jaws had dropped to the ground. Well, sort of. But I am confident they were muttering to each other something along the lines of, "How in the hell did they do that?"

I didn't care how they did that. As far as I was concerned, it was blind-ass luck. They still had to get back on my side, preferably unfried. I was now running a couple of hundred yards to the nearest gate, hoping to open it and coax them towards me and through the gate. As I reached the gate, I turned and looked towards Sable and Shadow. They had just completed their visit with the heifers and were returning towards the fence. I started shouting again, all to no avail – again. Sable thought this was no sweat. Shadow didn't think; he just followed. I was reworking my story again for Wendy. Sable didn't break stride again and leapt perfectly through the wire strands, followed closely by Shadow, all to the amazement and admiration of the rest of the dogs. No dog, I mean NO DOG, was going to mess with an American–born French poodle who could leap through an electric fence in a single

bound. On every subsequent visit to the farm, Sable was always in charge, albeit kind and gentle with the resident serfs. Shadow was just happy.

That was not their last time to ignore my commands at a time of personal distress. We were on the boat and cruising through the lovely Trent-Severn Waterway in the heart of the Province of Ontario. It was early morning, and we had stayed the night tied up to the seawall near one of the forty-six locks on the waterway. The lock house and restroom facility were under repair, but the thoughtful Canadians had supplied a couple of those large blue porta-potties. I left the boat with the two dogs on their leads for their morning walk, giving them a chance to "water the grass." When they were done, I had a similar urge and decided to use one of the porta-potties before returning to the boat.

So there I was, early in the morning, not another soul around, sitting in my nice and comfy lovely blue porta-potty, doing God's will. My two highly intelligent and perfectly trained poodles were in a down stay, still on their leads, right at the door of the porta-potty. The door was only slightly ajar so I could continue to hold their two leads while I did my thing. Everything was going pretty much to plan, if you know what I mean. Well, the dogs started to get a little restless. H-m-m, they were becoming more restless. Whoa, they were getting real restless; they were now no longer in a down stay. They were snarling . . . and then barking. I was still seated, with my pants around my ankles, holding their two leads with one hand. Uh-oh. They were freaking out. They were barking and lunging at something, apparently nearby. The door to the porta-potty was now wildly swinging open and shut, generally in time with the two dogs' lunges. The porta-potty was now being towed to the right as the dogs were lunging harder in that direction. The door was now really banging, the barking was at high decibels, my one arm was being stretched from holding their two leads in one hand, and I was having just a little difficulty pulling my pants up with the other hand. This could not be God's plan.

I still had no clue as to what was going on. Had a bear come by from the nearby woods? Was there a killer tiger on the loose? The door was still slamming away. The harder they lunged, the wider it opened and slammed. I got a glimpse of the seawall down the walkway, and what to my wandering eye appeared but a single German shepherd, being walked by his master. That guy must have been in stitches as he walked by. When he finally cleared our immediate area, the poodles had made enough racket to wake everyone on every boat in the vicinity, and they had pulled my outhouse at least five feet down the walkway. Why it never tipped over I'll never know, but I will be eternally grateful that did not occur. Needless to say, Sable and Shadow did not get a dog biscuit that morning as a reward for their normally good behavior.

I have written about them before, and the following pages are three of those efforts. One is "their" Christmas letter "To Mommy" from several years ago. The last two are Wendy's and my final expression for each of them, written shortly after each one left us for puppy heaven. As only dog owners can fully appreciate, the good-bys were very difficult and intense. Writing about them at the time, I guess, was a little therapy for me. The foregoing stories are meant to be shared primarily so others can know and understand how a simple four-legged critter can steal your heart.

TO MOMMY

Christmas will soon be here, so we thought we might remind you what we do for you all year long.

We cuddle our baby to remind you of yours.

We keep a night at home alone from being truly lonely.

We get you outside on beautiful fall days . . . and also on rainy, cold, and snowy days.

We treat you like a celebrity every time you come home.

We make you believe that we like every place you take us, even when we know that sometimes you are going to leave us there.

We warm your bed on cold nights.

We help you live a little longer.

We mark your furniture so you won't lose it.

We agree with everything you say.

We provide a use for old tennis balls.

We signal you when a thunderstorm is coming.

We help lower your blood pressure.

We test how fast you can run after us.

We keep squirrels from taking over our yard.

We remind you of the meaning of unconditional love.

We happily take our pills to make you happy.

We make you smile.

Love,

Sable and Shadow

SHADOW KIRBY
1990-2002

The process of adoption is always special for anyone who has ever adopted a child. It is often just as true for those of us who have acquired one of God's four-legged creatures through the same process. Wendy and I did just that over eleven years ago, when we acquired an 18-month-old standard-sized poodle. We did so somewhat by default, because it was the breeder who called Wendy and asked if we could provide a home for Shadow. The breeder knew us because we had previously bought Shadow's litter mate and sister, Sable, when she was just a puppy. Shadow had been acquired by his previous owners, who then proceeded to demonstrate that they knew little about how to treat and care for such a wonderful creation. He lived with them for a year and a half, never to enter the house or be played with, and only fed occasionally. At 18 months of age, he was 60% of his normal body weight. The breeder was asked to take him back, which she did, and immediately offered him to us as a free companion for our Sable. The word "free" is often an elusive term, and certainly was so in this instance. After a haircut and grooming (his first), a complete physical, treatments for mites, lice, worms, and assorted other problems, we took home our "free" poodle.

He was a pathetic creature. His scrawny and closely-shaven body was the perfect match for his fear of being further abused, as well as his total lack of people skills. Even though a year and a half old, Shadow did not know how to get in and out of a car, had trouble negotiating the two steps down into our living room, and would cower if you simply raised your arm. He didn't know how to chase a ball, and never did learn to return that which he had been encouraged to fetch. But my how he could wag his tail.

His field of expertise was quite simple. Above all else in the world, he just wanted to please us. He was responsive to a fault, grateful for the smallest of favors, and basked in the glow of the love and affection that was showered upon him by us all. He always gave more than he received. This was especially true of his sister and role model, who totally dominated his life, corrected him often for his doofus-like behavior, and always did everything better than he could ever hope to do – except . . . wag his tail.

Shadow was with us for eleven years. He was our model for love and devotion. A single stroke of his back, or a modest scratch of an ear, would send his tail into overdrive. Even towards the last, when his cancer-ravaged body challenged him to barely raise his head, he always seemed to make his tail work. His will to please never ceased. During his last few visits to the vet and to Purdue for IV feedings and chemo treatment, his compliant nature never failed him. We would simply attach his leash to his collar, and he would struggle to place one paw in front of the other as he slowly made his way, once again, into the treatment room. His faith in us and his allegiance to us was undying. He knew, without hesitation, that whatever we decided would be what was best for him. He believed in us, and walked those last few steps with us filled with faith and trust. His spirit remained intact. It was only his body that couldn't quite make the final journey – except for his tail.

SHE WAS JUST A DOG

We have lost our Sable. She went to puppy heaven a few days ago. Sable was a major part of our lives for over fourteen years. She brought love and joy to us, and to many of you with whom we shared this magnificent creature of God's love.

Sable was both intelligent and obedient, and as our children have said, she was the leader and role model for their pets for many years. She was supremely confident, always in charge when with other dogs, and stoic in pain or when visiting the vet. In short, she had an attitude. She would test us at times, but it was just a reminder that she responded to our commands because she chose to – not just because we said so.

Two years ago she lost her lifetime companion and litter mate, Shadow. They were both black standard-sized poodles, but let there be no doubt, Sable was the in-charge "A" dog. Fortunately, Shadow was always comfortable in his role as second fiddle. He could never hope to do all that Sable could do, or do anything as well as her. Such is a dog's life, and he was always so happy just to be with her.

For a long time we felt that healthy and robust Shadow would outlive Sable, but it was not to be. He lost his first battle with cancer, while Sable continued to live and survive four potentially lethal "bullets" during her last three years. The vet called Sable her miracle dog. As her body began to fail her, she adjusted to her limitations. She lost all of her hearing and much of her sight, thus increasing her sense of smell and her resultant behavior of sniffing out and getting into everything. Occasionally, she would test the edge of her limitations, if only to remind herself that she could not return. Her mental capacity maintained itself until the last few months. Ultimately, her quality of life simply became too demeaning for this unique member of our family.

When the time came, we think she knew. She sensed the agony of our decision and the great feeling of our impending loss. As was typical of Sable, she made the passage with the dignity and grace that she had shared with us her entire life. We like to think that she was not put to sleep, but rather that she was sent upon the next step in her journey, with her spirit and soul intact, hopefully to rejoin with and manage Shadow.

She leaves us with countless memories and stories, and they range from her earliest puppy days to her elegant and stately final hours. She was "just a dog," but her place in our hearts and minds will always be as a loving and loved member of our family.

CHRISTMAS LETTERS

Christmas letters in a book? You've got to be kidding me. Or so you might think. Indeed, it is a very good question. Do we just need some filler for the book, or do we have a goal of how many pages should be a minimum number? The truth of the matter is, over the years we have enjoyed comments from those who have received our notes and pictures during the holiday season. There seems to be a common thread among those comments about grandchildren pictures and the information we share about them.

What we share is not just by accident. We really have thought about it each year, hopefully in the spirit of the season. Our pictures and letters have been mostly about grandchildren, obviously because we love to talk about them. If we look into our future, with our glass half full, they are that future. It is not so much where they have been or what they have done. It is rather who they are and what they are all about. It is a little dose of reality, flavored with a hopeful touch of humor. We don't try to humanize them; they do that for us.

If we seem to present members of our family as a little quirky, a little off-beat, or strange, or weird, we're really trying to paint a picture of what we believe is normal. In essence, we are blessed to have a family that is loving, caring, and often humorous. At times they can be trying, stressful, and a pain in the butt. Simply, we try to make our Christmas letters and photos reflect the essence of who we are and what we are.

We have included just the last six years. That should provide a physical growth chart for the grandchildren, and an apparent lack of maturation for our children. All remain . . . normal? You be the judge. Enjoy.

Sara and Leah Kirby

Kirby, Kristopher, and Kaitlyn O'Mara

Max Borland

Ryan Borland

Julie, Sabrina, and Cassandra Kirby

CHRISTMAS 2004

GRANDCHILD COLLAGE

Happy Holidays:

You will note this year that our grandchild picture is a "collage." That's French for "No more group pictures!" Some of you have known that for several years, but because Wendy is from Michigan, she's still a little slow. So anyway, how 'bout them BUCKEYES!? Did we kick Michigan's butt, or what? Oops, I digressed. (Isn't that what old people are supposed to do?)

So let's see here . . . what's happenin'? Well, for one thing, parts of our family have just moved or will be moving in the next few months, including us. Wendy and I will be moving this month to a new location on Geist Lake, about three blocks from our present home. The new joint has more outdoor space, including a pool, boathouse, and small beach, complete with ocean views and sunsets (for those with ample imaginations). Since our summer boating days are pretty much over, we thought this might fill the void. Otherwise, we might have to sit around the house and communicate.

Ned and Rochelle and daughters Cassandra and Sabrina moved from Urbana, Ohio, to Melbourne, Florida, during hurricane season. DUH! Apparently, Ned's new employer was so anxious for his arrival that they couldn't wait any longer. At least that's what Ned tells me. At any rate, they have already settled in their new home, complete with several new neighbors and friends, and are quite happy they moved. I was saddened by the fact that they will be the last Kirbys to live in the old homestead in Urbana, but their time in Urbana left me in agreement with their feelings that Urbana is just not quite like it used to be. The house they moved from is over 150 years old and had had at least seven generations of our family in residence. The house was originally located on the other side of Scioto Street but was moved near the end of the 19th century by means of teams of horses pulling it over large tree trunks that served as rollers. Now that's moving!

The next move will be this coming summer, when Scott and Do and daughters Sara and Leah will move to Paris for a year. France is Do's home country, and she still has parents and much family in the south of France, near Albi, and a sister and brother in Paris. By the way, Scott has found a new medium for expressing himself: painting. As is always the case with Scott, whatever he does seems to demonstrate a lot of creativity. So it appears as though his music will keep the bread on the table as he explores yet another avenue within the arts. Do thinks his work reminds her of Toulouse Lautrec, so perhaps we can soon refer to Scott as "Too Loose" Kirby. (Okay, that was bad.)

Yet another move has daughter Kristin and husband Kevin, along with rugrats Kirby, Kaitlyn, and Kristopher, moving from Hilliard, Ohio, to Hilliard, Ohio, but on the Scioto River. It's a lovely home and a gorgeous site, but I always thought there was a lot of strange stuff floating by in that river. It does go through Arlington, right? Kevin's firm continues to contract HVAC for much of Franklin County, while Kristin appears to be a full-time chauffeur, what with baseball, basketball, swimming, piano lessons, school plays, and, of course, therapy sessions for herself as this brood approaches the teenage years.

Gregg, Brent, Eric, and families have stayed put on the home front but have been active in many senses of the word. Gregg and Gina gave birth over a year ago to their first born, Max, who was wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger, although there was room available at the Inn. Gregg continues to manage the Road

America operation for the Skip Barber School of Racing but has also recently branched out in a similar venture of his own. Ah yes, the entrepreneurial spirit lives. Gina's life is also full as she learns the ropes of continuing to be a rock for Gregg and a dynamite mom for Max.

Brent and Megan live nearby in Indianapolis, are our most recently married children, and claim they are still "practicing" as it relates to producing grandchildren. A likely story! Brent continues to do engineering/mechanical stuff for Forsyth Championship Racing, travels the world, but always seems to be happy to return home. And why shouldn't he be? With Megan and dog Wrigley (named after Wrigley Field), what more could anyone ask for? And Megan, in all her humility, will not acknowledge that she is a "fast tracker" at Eli Lilly, so I will tell you so. She does statistical and systems analysis stuff and is well known and thought of up to and including the CAO at Lilly. I met him at a wedding reception, where he personally told me that Megan was doing a great job, and then he proceeded to polish off his fourth martini.

Eric and Laura live about ten minutes from us and have been joined by our latest family addition. Baby Ryan is now a half-year old, and this one really was akin to the Second Coming. Furthermore, Wendy has taken over a wing of their home as her permanent residence. She doesn't have to volunteer to babysit. She just sits there, at the ready, and is available at a moment's notice. In just six short months, we have given up a trip to Hawaii, skiing at Aspen, cruising the Caribbean, visiting in France, all so she could babysit Ryan. Hence we have come full cycle. Now you know why we had to but a new home. As I mentioned, it has a pool for Ryan to splash in, a boathouse to shelter his fleet of nautical toys, and a beach where he can practice building castles, no doubt to be funded by his grandmother. Eric continues to work with us here at KirTac, making great strides in his transition from the big corporate world to the entrepreneurial world of business. He is one of a handful of young but highly capable people who gently but constantly maneuver me closer and closer to the front door.

Wendy has already made a most graceful transition, as her focus and commitment have continued to grow at Second Presbyterian Church here in Indianapolis. She serves on the Session of the church and represents Second Pres. in a number of its missions. If I must share her with a greater being than ME, I think she has chosen well. She continues to be my favorite bible-thumper. We are blessed with good health, great family, and are gaining the time to share and enjoy our health, family, and . . . each other. We wish the same blessings for each of you during this special season of the year.

CHRISTMAS 2005

NEVER AGAIN – REALLY !

Happy Holidays!

Remember our vow to never again attempt a group picture of grandchildren? Well, we had a short period of Memory Lapse, and gave it our best shot. This has resulted in several conclusions:

1. Group pictures of dogs are still easier.
2. Anyone below the age of six must have the smile painted on their face.
3. Do not request everyone's simultaneous attention – it is not possible.

The picture this year was staged in our backyard at our new home on Geist Lake, still in Indianapolis. We have learned that outside pictures result in less damage to the house, although we have since lost the tree (no kidding)

that provided the shade for the enclosed idyllic picture. I have also learned why a synonym for *photograph* is the word *shoot*.

So, do you still want to know the names and lineage of this happy little group of family grandchildren? Okay . . . let's get this over with. We will journey from front to back in the photo in order to end on a more smiling note!

Front row, left to right: Sabrina Kirby, age 3, is attempting to stare down a fire-breathing dragon. (She will win.) She is the daughter of Ned and Rochelle Kirby, now residing in Melbourne, Florida. Next to Sabrina is Leah Kirby, age 3, daughter of Scott and Do Kirby, now residing in Villefranche, France, for one year. They are living in Do's grandmother's old farmhouse, at the edge of a lovely village in the south of France. It appears as though Leah is practicing her French heritage in the picture, letting everyone know that she is not a happy camper, and that it is someone else's fault. With such a lovely name as Leah-Marie Juliette Kirby, you would think she would want to be more like her grandfather Jean Pierre Verdier, rather than Chirac or Villepin. C'est la vie.

Second row, left to right: 7-year-old Sara Kirby (Scott and Do) is attending school in France and doing quite well, thank you very much, because she and Leah are already bilingual. Sara's buddy in the second row is Cassandra (Ned and Rochelle), whose worried expression is caused by her consternation that her younger sister will not be able to turn back the fire-breathing dragon. (Fear not, Cassie – all is well.)

The long row in the back starts with Kirby O'Mara (13) and his brother Kristopher (7). The sons of Kevin and Kristin O'Mara, now living in Hilliard, Ohio. The blonde in the middle is Julie Kirby (14), daughter of Ned, and she is holding cousin Max Borland (2), son of Gregg and Gina Borland, who live in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin. Max has recently been joined by Gregg and Gina's second birthing surprise, Ava (a month or so old at this writing), making her our special little blessing for 2005. Her inset photo is lower left. Moving right along, the little boy with four hands is Ryan Borland (1), being held by his father Eric, with permission from mother Laura – all three of whom are still residing in Indianapolis with their two little puppies, 80-pound Weimaraner Simon and 100-pound Great Dane Lucy. (No 100-pound dog should be named Lucy!) Finishing the back row we have Kaitlyn O'Mara (10), who has attention diversion disorder, as evidenced by her inability to face the camera upon demand. She is, however, an accomplished swimmer in her age group in Ohio, and parents Kevin and Kristin have already booked seats for all of us at the 2012 Olympics in London.

Missing from the picture are the children of Brent and Megan Borland, recently moved to Cedarburg (Milwaukee suburb), Wisconsin. Brent and Megan are still practicing. However, Megan has managed to acquire one additional redeeming value, placing her in the top ranks of "Most-Favored-Daughter-In-Law." Her new job at Miller Brewing in Milwaukee enables her to supply all family members with a monthly stipend of a free case of beer. Megan looks particularly cute behind the wheel of her beer truck as she delivers to us our monthly ration of "The Champagne of Bottled Beer."

The rare gathering of all our grandchildren was during the Fourth of July weekend. It was a wondrous family get-together as our children brought one another up to date and cousins got to know one another better. It was a reminder to Wendy and me of a time when we really did go "over the river and through the woods to Grandmother's house." Today's world requires that our scattered family cover hundreds and thousands of miles, from across our great country and even across the ocean. It does not, however, diminish the need to share, or the gathering of family to be as one, if only for an occasional weekend.

It is Wendy's and my hope that the generation in our picture will continue to gather as one and remember times past when they gathered together as children, and then as parents, and later as grand-parents. Some day, it will be their home that will be "Grandmother's house."

And it is Wendy's and my particular wish that each of you also share together with your family at your own "Grandmother's house," wherever and whenever that may be, and may the blessings of this special time of year also be the blessings upon that house and those who gather there, now and forever.

CHRISTMAS 2006

TWO GENERATIONS

Season's Greetings:

You know you're old when half your kids are age 40 or more. We will soon reach that milestone with the 40th birthday of son Gregg. Sons Ned and Scott have already made it to that level of age, albeit not quite yet to that level of maturity.

In spite of their lesser degree of maturation, we thought it appropriate this year to have our group picture be that of Wendy and myself plus eleven of our twelve children and spouses. Number twelve, the one who is missing, is Scott's wife Do, who chose to get sick on the weekend of the photo shoot. Because she is French-born (with a name like Marie-Dominique, what else could she be?), we thought maybe she was having a little independence attitude. But her doc said, "No travel." C'est la vie.

As you can tell by the picture, our kids married well. Not much money, but a lot of good lookers, plus our one son-in-law, Kevin. He fits in particularly well with our five sons. They all love beer! Oh, yes, Kevin is in the red shirt in the second row – the one with the beer bottle.

Another beer bottle holder in the second row is at your far right end. He is son Brent, and kneeling in front of his is his wife Megan. Megan is positioned so that she cannot see Brent's hand on the young chick next to him, who is Rochelle. Rochelle is married to the other Ned in the picture, the one to her immediate right with the Ned Sr. haircut. Moving farther left across the back row, immediately to red-shirt Kevin's right, is our one daughter, the charming and vivacious Kristin. She is standing next to her brother Scott and probably telling him to move his hand or she will punch his lights out. (Well, what would you say if you grew up with five brothers?) Scott is still learning to dress himself, as evidenced by his jacket and tie. His right hand is on his brother Eric's shoulder. Eric, in turn, has his right hand somewhere behind his wife Laura, who is to his immediate right. Laura is the one with the wine glass and the silly smile. She is standing next to the last brother, Gregg, on his right end of the picture, who is attempting to be discreet with his beer bottle, to no avail. Also, his large forehead suggests he will soon be combing his hair creatively. Kneeling next to Gregg is his wife Gina, behaving herself, as always, and not spilling a drop from her glass. (Note: The half of a guitar player in the background is likely a leftover from the previous party.)

Poppy and Mema occupy the chairs front and center, because we are the grandparents! The grandchild count is still eleven, but practicing continues. We did not attempt a grandchild picture this year, so you'll just have to accept our count. In case you can't tell by the photo, this is a group that plays well together, is fairly good at sharing, and actually likes one another. Miracles do happen, and for that we are blessed.

In turn, we wish for you and yours the blessings of family and friends, and we wish to share with you the miracles that make this season the most special time of year.

CHRISTMAS 2007

AROUND THE WORLD

Greetings and Happy Holidays.

This year we are featuring as our cover photos our two latest additions in the grandchild category.

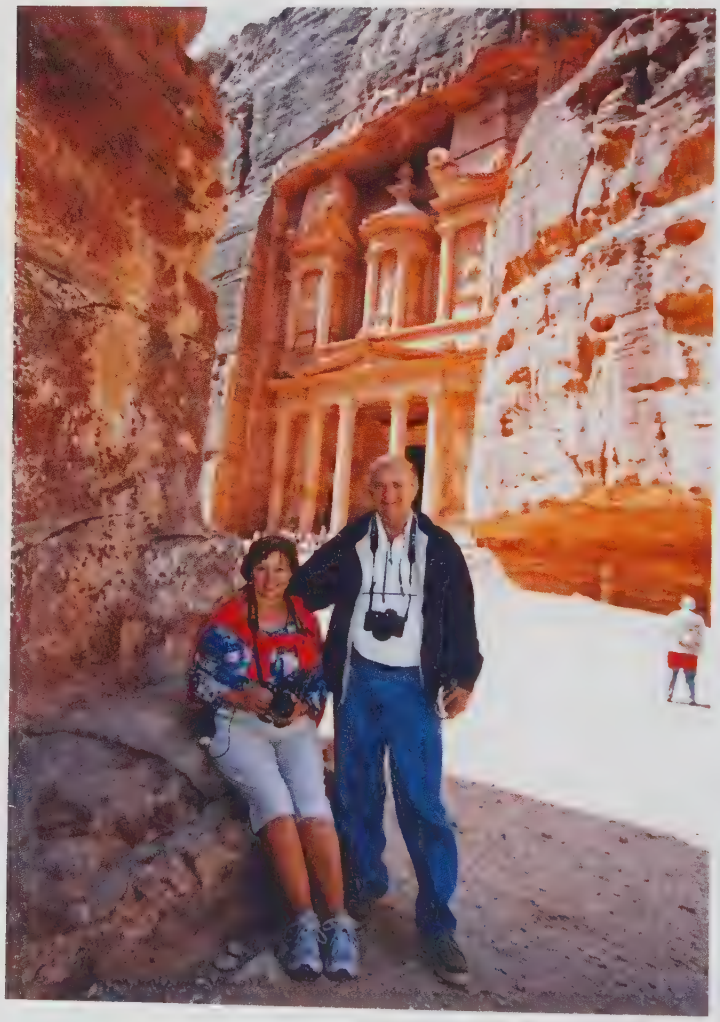
You will be pleased to learn that in the case of Brent and Megan, practice makes perfect. They delivered to us their first born, a wonderful little boy, on August 8 of this year. His birth weight was 6 lb. 4 oz. and his name is William. His maternal grandparents state that they first saw him wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. (He is their first grandchild – rookies!) He is known as "Will."

Eric and Laura presented us with yet another baby boy on October 9. He weighed in at 6 lb. 15 oz. and is named Benjamin. Ben is already learning the Buckeye Battle Cry from his four-year-old brother. I think we keep having boys because I have lobbied hard for the next baby girl to be named "Edwina."

We now have a baker's dozen (13) and are told that future additions will likely only be the result of recreational activities. However, we automatically raise our total count to 14 with the inclusion of the adopted son of one of our former district managers, who was brought to America from Russia by his new mother, Penny McDole, accompanied by Wendy. His full name is Nathaniel Pavel Kirby McDole, and he is now five years of age, and is in charge of his kindergarten class.

The other enclosed pictures this year serve as a reminder that, once you retire, your main goal should be to spend your children's inheritance. We have now pursued that goal for a little over a year and have had great success. Wendy, in particular, has taken the challenge quite seriously as she is now in the middle of her third major remodel project, the old three-hole outhouse at the farm. The additional photos are all from our 24-day "Around the World Trip," taken in March of this year. The trip and the destinations are so special to us that we have chosen this year to do . . . yep, you guessed it . . . a travelogue!!!!

It was a wondrous journey – 12 stops in 24 days – something akin to a forced march. It took us to destinations we had dreamed about as well as those of great cultural and historic merit, plus a couple that were exotic and full of mystique.



Petra, Jordan, the 1000-B.C. trading post on the historic Silk Road.

The ancient Incan ruins of Machu Picchu, high in the Andes mountains of Peru.

The mysterious Moai statures located in the middle of the Pacific on Easter Island.

The great Buddhist Temple of Angkor Wat, located near Siem Reap, Cambodia.

The Giant Panda Research Center in Chengdu, China. My favorite picture!

The Potala Palace, former summer residence of the Dali Lamas, in Lhasa, Tibet.

The Taj Mahal in Agra, India. Words are inadequate . . . .

Meeting again with our old friend and guide, Erasto Mollel, on safari in Tanzania.

The Pyramids, near Cairo, Egypt.

Marrakech, Morocco: an Arab city that is mystical, exotic, and friendly.

The Temple of Luxor, Egypt, rented for our Farewell Banquet.

We have also included a picture of a young girl from Petra, Jordan, a picture that reminds us what much of the world is all about. Her little box holds stones that she found, cleaned, and sold on the street. Wendy bought two from her and gave her $2.00. She followed us the rest of the day, not to make another sale, but for companionship. She gave us a little plastic bag that she found on the ground in which to place our rocks. When it was time for us to leave, she extended her hand and said in perfect English, " Madam, it was so nice to meet you." She then watched us as we walked out of her life. I can only imagine her thoughts and her dreams, but our sense is that her life will continue to be difficult and her blessings will be few. Our guide later told us that Wendy's $2.00 purchase represented 2-4 week's income for the little girl.

Our visit to Petra, like all of the other sites on this wonderful journey, reminded us that a vast majority of the world's people continue to live in poverty, with little hope for change within their lifetime. All of the sites we visited were in countries that had wondrous cultures, significant niches in world history, and little of what we take for granted in our daily lives.

CHRISTMAS 2008

SO YOU LIKE THE GRANDCHILDREN PICS?

So you like the grandchildren pics? Me too. At least I liked them until I found out that there would be no I.D. names on the collage of photos, and so, here we go again.

This memo is NOT my idea! I would much rather have just sent cards out "as is" and have everyone guess who belongs to whom, what are their names and ages, and who are brothers and sisters. Obviously, they are all cousins, but the resident grandmother stated unequivocally that it needed more. I mean, really, do people actually read this stuff?

Top row of five (L to R), Ryan Borland, age 4, oldest son of Eric and Laura Borland, who has already read "War and Peace" and authored three children's books; the three middle young people are Kristopher, age 10, Kirby, age 16 and Kaitlyn, age 13, all three from the Kevin and Kristin Kirby O'Mara family. Kaitlyn is Kristin's first female teenager; emphasis on "female." Welcome to the world of frazzled. Kirby is now driving and has only wrecked MY vehicles – namely the golf cart and the motor scooter on the dairy farm! The final photo in the top row of 5 is Ava Borland, age 3, the one with the death grip on "cow." Ava is the second-born child of Gregg and Gina Borland.

Middle row of three handsome young men (L to R): Benjamin Borland, age 1, second-born son of Eric and Laura, and brother of Ryan. In the exact middle of the second row, and in fact in the exact middle of the entire collage, is Master Will Borland, age 1. He is the one with more hair than is needed and has a flower growing from his left ear. He is the ONLY son of Brent and Megan Borland. (Brent and Megan, as you may recall, are the ones who have been "practicing" this baby production routine for eons.) Next to Will is Max Borland, age 5, first born of Gregg and Gina, and older brother of Ava, whom he delights in bedeviling, until she unloads a right upper-cut on his chin. (She is one tough chick.)

Bottom row (L to R): the group pic is of Cassandra, age 8, Julie, age 17, and Sabrina, age 6, the family of Ned and Rochelle Kirby. Julie has the other two in training, learning how to survive in the world of blondes. My personal take is that Cassie will manipulate her way through the maze, and Sabrina will be from the school of "damn the torpedoes." Next is the handsome young couple, lovingly known as Mema and Poppy to the assembled 13 other young people in the collage. The bottom, far-right duo are Sara, age 10, and Leah, age 6, the daughters of Scott and Marie-Dominique Kirby. These are the two who will likely turn out reasonably normal, in spite of their paranoid and over-protective father, who insists that neither will have a date until they have graduated from high school, and he then plans to send them to the nearest convent. It almost makes you think that maybe Scott was not such a good little boy during his youth. Don't look at me. He is from an entirely foreign gene-pool, much of which is still under analysis. I'm normal!

We wish everyone the very best for this special season, and I ask that each of you wish for me a pre-annotated picture collage for next year.

CHRISTMAS 2009

CHRISTMAS AT THE KIRBYS

It is once again time to behold our thirteen nearly perfect grandchildren. I will do my best to try to remember their names and to whom they belong. As to age, gender and temperament, you're on your own. (Oops; I just noticed that their names are already on the card.) I'm home free! . . . And away we go.

Top left: Sarah and Leah, daughters of Scott and Marie-Dominique Kirby of Sand Point, Idaho. We asked them to live that far away so as not to tarnish the normal members of our family. After all, it is a given that musicians and artists are a little weird. Strangely, their two daughters are quite normal. Sarah is a budding violinist and pianist and Leah is learning how to grow teeth.

Top right: Ryan and Benjamin. Obviously, they are Colts fans; they live with their parents Eric and Laura Borland, in Indianapolis. They are geographically the closest to us and thus are in first place for Colts tickets, 500 tickets, usage of our boats, swimming pool, and hot tub, and have garnered the pole position for most

favored status in the Will. Ryan and Benjamin help the cause by knowing the names of both their grandparents. We are known to them as "Mema" and "Silly Poppy." (There is no justice.)

Right center is Master William, son of Brent and Megan Borland of Cedarburg, Wisconsin. Megan continues to drive a beer truck for Miller/ Coors Brewing (or maybe some job in marketing), and Brent works with his brother Gregg in their company known as Armsup Motor Sports. Would you believe it: Will is a complete automotive freak, as evidenced by the bright red truck glued firmly to his right hand.

Lower right: Sabrina, Julie, and Cassandra. (With this family, I always have to use spell-check.) Get this: three daughters, all in the same family, and they actually like each other. They are the daughters of Ned and Rochelle from Melbourne, Florida. Julie is a senior in high school and a star performer in several high school productions. (Apparently she has yet to talk with her Uncle Scott about making a living in the Arts.) Cassandra is a talented artist, leaving Sabrina as the only normal one of the three.

Lower left: Now here's a pair near and dear to my heart. Max and Ava are the children of Gregg and Gina Borland of Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin. Gregg and Gina are proprietors of their own enterprises, Armsup Motor Sports and Gina's Custom Framing. Guess who thinks SHE is supporting the other one! Nonetheless, they are doing a marvelous parenting job, as evidenced by the two scarlet and gray OHIO STATE football jerseys. I do wish, however, they would ask daughter Ava to forget what I told her about my age last year. She still delights in telling EVERYONE that "Poppy is older than dirt!"

Left of Center: (Does this mean they're Democrats? Remove them from the Will!) Kris, Kirby, and Kaitlyn live with parents Kevin and Kristin O'Mara in Hilliard, Ohio. This family is closest to the farm, but I get very little free labor from any of them. These kids wouldn't know manure if they stepped in it. Kaitlyn is a state-ranked swimmer in her age bracket; Kristopher is an electronic genius, having mastered every video game known to God; and . . . here we go again: Kirby possesses a wondrous tenor voice in his 6'4" frame, and now has a voice coach. (Kirby . . . talk to Uncle Scott!)

Ah such is life – wonderful kids and grandkids, all smart enough not to listen to us. I guess that means they are normal and we are blessed. We hope you are as blessed at this special time of year.

WORDS AND MUSIC

Because this project began as an effort to share thoughts and experiences with my grandchildren, perhaps a page or two specifically meant for them would be appropriate. If you are not a grandchild of mine, it is still likely that you are a grandchild of somebody, so feel free to continue on with this brief chapter.

Words and Music, two of the greatest means of communication ever known to mankind – even more so when the two have been combined together. The Kirby Kabin no longer stands in the woods of our farm in Champaign County, Ohio, but the plaque above the front door of the Kabin will always be part of my memory of that wonderful place. The words were quite simple and yet elegant in their own way:

"The beauty of the house is order.
The blessing of the house is contentment.
The glory of the house is hospitality."

These words are the message on the front page of the flyer in this book about the Kirby Kabin. The flyer was written by my father and presented to thousands of guests during the National Plowing Matches, held on our farm in 1950. Nearly one hundred thousand visitors viewed the competition in the field next to the woods and then strolled through the 52-acre Kabin Woods. For this event, the woods were filled with dozens of agricultural product displays and a more than adequate number of food and beverage vendors. The Kabin was the headquarters for this great three-day celebration of American agriculture.

Taking a small page from the history of the Kabin, the newly refurbished house at the west end of the farm now has a new sign above the front door. It serves as a reminder to all who enter of the family tradition and history of this farm and its residence. This message of greeting says:

"Home is where your story begins."

For this farm, our family's story began in 1862, when John Kirby and his son, John S. Kirby, purchased the half section of land along the banks of Buck Creek. The original John Kirby was the one who came to this country as a 14-year-old lad, by himself, leaving all whom he knew back home in the village of Bilbrough, England. His obituary was printed in the Urbana Citizen in 1888, and is reprinted here in its entirety. Not only does it provide insight into this man's character, but its elegant prose reminds us of the beauty that can be conveyed by the written word.

OBITUARY

Editor of Daily Citizen:

John Kirby, whose familiar form has for more than twenty years last past been seen moving in his peculiar gait, has taken his last stroll upon our streets, and is now numbered with the dead past. He was born in Yorkshire, Old England, in January 1805, and at the age of fourteen years took passage for the United States in an old sail ship propelled by the oar and the elements, and was for about ten weeks, through weather fair and foul, through storm and

tempest, accompanied by dangers seen and unseen during the long voyage, landing on our shores a penniless boy, in a strange land and among strangers, about the year 1819.

This boy, having been brought up to industrious habits, soon determined to seek a permanent location and 'hoe his own row,' and soon selected Cincinnati and commenced to operate in a small and safe way, working industriously, saving his earnings and applying them in assisting the other members of his family, one by one, to immigrate to his chosen home, which in due time was fully accomplished. He soon groped his way by determined perseverance into very lucrative enterprises, connecting butchering and tallow chandling with the other offshoots of his professed calling, and soon began to accumulate large honest profits, and applying them to judicious investments in real estate and other equally remunerative channels, he was soon classed with the wealthy population of Cincinnati; and as a further illustration of his indefatigable exertions in business matters, I will by way of episode in this connection here state that the writer of this was very intimate with Mr. Kirby and on one occasion we happened to meet quite early one morning on the Public Square before any of the shops or stores were open, and he burst out in his brusque manner in a criticism on such a flagrant lack of business energy. 'Why,' said he, ' I have in my business lifetime made $500 in my business operations before this time of day.'

I give this as a key to his ideas of unabated exertion, and as a key note to his prosperity. Thus, for some forty years he delved in business successful enterprises, and the results are patent to this whole community. Young men, take lessons from John Kirby and apply yourselves vigorously to some remunerative business, and instead of being drones you may reach his altitude in thrift. Try it.

Mr. Kirby in early life entered into a marital relationship with a lady of acknowledged merit, but in the run of a few years she sickened and died, leaving him with one surviving child, John S. Kirby, with whom for the past twenty years he has made his home in Urbana, and on the large Buck Creek farm near Powhatan, in this township.

Those who knew Mr. Kirby best know him to have had great business capacity, and know, too, that, notwithstanding all his peculiarities, he had the heart to feel others' woes and wants, and generously held out the helping hand for their relief without the sound of a trumpet.

He for the last quarter of a century has suffered greatly from loss of hearing and the worst type of inflammatory rheumatism. No one but himself could realize the intense suffering through which he has passed, and which, with other maladies, culminated in death on Saturday afternoon, 7th inst.

Mr. Kirby remained perfectly conscious until his last gasp of life, expressing perfect willingness to go to rest, manifesting that all would be well with him: and certainly no one could better understand his final condition than himself and his God.

A Friend of the Family

Urbana, April 8, 1883

Yet, the most expressive and moving use of words, in my judgment, is gained when combined with music. Whether religious, patriotic, operatic, or hard rock, words with music can soothe the heart and stir the soul. Some of the oldies-but-goodies from any church hymnal serve that purpose for me. Quite simple numbers such as "The Church in the Wildwood," "In the Garden," or "Rock of Ages," or more majestic songs such as "God of our Fathers" or "Battle Hymn of the Republic," are all songs to be sung with heart and soul. Some of the great patriotic numbers such as "God Bless America," "America the Beautiful," and, of course, the "Star Spangled Banner" have the same effect. If these songs don't make your heart beat a little faster and cause your spirit to soar, then you're not paying attention! "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord," or "Oh beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain" – it doesn't get any better than that.

There are two songs whose words have remained in my memory for over fifty years. I learned both of them in high school while under the direction of my mentor, Dick Shoup. The first number was a senior choir song, and the second number was performed by the Castleaires, a high school male glee club. I don't recall the name of the choir number, but I will forever remember the words. You may also find these exact same words inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty, part of the poem "The New Colossus," by Emma Lazarus.

> "Give me your tired, your poor,
> Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
> The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
> Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me.
> I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

The eloquence of the words becomes even more powerful when sung by the innocent voices of a high school choir. The Castleaires number is "Era of Peace, " and there is a passage of that song, sung in unison, that is a prayer for peace, a prayer that is appropriate for the ages.

> "Peace: Lord, create in us thy peace.
> Grant to mortals here who reign,
> thy wisdom and humility.
> Lord, mend our ways to thine.
> Oh grant an end to mortal strife,
> And lead all peoples to thy throne."

As I type these words, I find myself humming the notes of music, my memory taking me back a half-century to a time when we were children. The songs were each about a quest – the first for freedom, and the second for peace. My understanding and appreciation for those quests was limited back then. Indeed, my focus was on neither the words nor the music. My focus was on the expressive hands of Dick Shoup as he led us through each song with the subtleties of a twist of the wrist or a crook of a finger – the nuances of his hands as he led us through the crescendos and pianissimos that made words and music come together in an expression of humankind's historic quests for freedom and peace. As the years pass, my appreciation and understanding have grown, not only for the quests, but also for having the opportunity to share in the experience of sharing words and music with lifetime friends and family, led by my teacher and mentor, Dr. E. Richard Shoup. My prayer is that all of my grandchildren will have the opportunity to share in great music and have mentors whose lessons will last them a lifetime.

Ned ~~receiving the Congressional Med~~ being recognized as Outstanding Cadet in Army ROTC at Ohio State his senior year.

WE'RE IN THE ARMY NOW

I look back now at decisions I made nearly fifty years ago, and they don't make much more sense now than they did then. How does one make good decisions in his early twenties? We think we know everything, and we then proceed to prove to ourselves that we know next to nothing.

Why I decided to stay in Army ROTC, I really don't remember. Probably because Berwanger said he was going to stay in . . . or some other stupid reason. Of course there was a draft back then, and there was also the erroneous perception that you were safer as an officer than as an enlisted man. Officers don't get shot at. And then I found out that forward observers are always lieutenants, usually from

the ranks of Army Intelligence officers. It was only after I finished officers' combat training at Fort Benning, Georgia, and proceeded on to the Army Intelligence School at Fort Holabird, Maryland, that I found out that the average life span of a forward observer in combat is something less than five minutes. Now that's expendable!

Fort Holabird was a very small military post on Holabird Avenue in Dundalk, Maryland. Dundalk is a Baltimore suburb, and Fort Holabird was mid-point between the huge Bethlehem Steel Works at Sparrows Point and a Four Roses distillery warehouse. We had all of the sights, sounds, and smells of the average Baltimore neighborhood.

While I did request the Intelligence Branch, I'm not certain why. Maybe it just seemed cool. I did find out later that my ROTC grades and my boot camp credentials at Fort Benning were helpful, though they were not the result of any serious commitments on my part. I was to be an officer on active duty for six months and then spend seven and a half years in the Army Reserve. However, while we were training at Benning, Vietnam was heating up and all six-month officers were automatically extended to two years of active duty. We didn't even get to vote on it! On the other hand, that made me eligible for some of the Army's longer-term training programs, such as the Army Intelligence School's 26-week program known as Imagery Interpretation.

Fort Holabird was not unlike a college campus. The whole post numbered only a few hundred students and a couple hundred staff and faculty. The post was also shared with the school for the Central Intelligence Agency. For those who think I might be a little weird, you have never been in a classroom with a bunch of people from the CIA. Those dudes are really strange. Don't get me wrong. They were really smart and very committed to their mission, and a lot more serious than the lieutenants and captains in my class of twenty-four. There were, however, two exceptions in my class. We had two Marine captains as fellow students, both of them career officers. This was their career, and with them it was all business. At the end of the 26-week course, they ranked first and second in the class. (I was fourth!)

I really liked the portion of my military career at Holabird. It was interesting and challenging, and we really felt like our mission had a genuine purpose. Fort Holabird was known back then as the "Spook School." It is still remembered by that name to this day around Baltimore. We were in the intelligence gathering business, and imagery interpretation was on the cutting edge. This was nearly fifty years ago, during the infancy of U-2 spy planes, the time of a U-2 pilot by the name of Francis Gary Powers and the peak of the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States. Times were scary.

We only needed to read the morning newspaper to learn which saber Nikita Khrushchev was rattling on that particular day. He was also testing our newly-elected young president, John F. Kennedy. It sort of looked like a mismatch between a tough old grizzled Russian veteran and a wet-behind-the-ears, Harvard-educated do-gooder, the junior senator from Massachusetts.

All the more reason for us to give our president the best Intelligence he could have. He already had one arm tied behind his back. Perhaps, just perhaps, we could make a difference. I don't want to overplay this. We were youngsters in a serious business, and we didn't quite get the whole picture, nor did we fully appreciate the moment in the history of the free world in which we were to play a small but significant role. But back then, there was a commitment. We didn't talk about it, and the media didn't question it, and family and friends and everyone back home was supportive and respectful. We didn't question whether our President was old enough, or smart enough, or experienced enough, or motivated enough to make the right decisions. He was our leader; our

Commander-In-Chief. If he had ordered us to walk on water, we would be looking for the rocks to stand on.

Imagery interpretation was a relatively new intelligence-gathering science for which the U-2 planes had been specifically designed. I have told countless times the story of some of the sophisticated photography we were utilizing nearly a half-century ago. Remember, U-2 aircraft flew at an altitude of 100,000 feet: that's twenty miles UP. The average airliner today flies at an altitude of about one-third that height. Even at that altitude, we could tell a jeep from a tank, from a personnel carrier, from a deuce and a half. (For you non-military folks, a deuce and a half is a 2½-ton truck.) And that's just for openers.

Most of our photography was flown up and down the East-West German border. It was that border, more than any other border in the world, where the Americans and the Soviets had their grandiose military stand-off. Within a few miles of that border, for the entire length of several hundred miles, both sides of the border bristled with every kind of military equipment, rolling stock, munitions, and the latest and greatest array of new weaponry known to mankind. Not the least important among all that weaponry were the areas dedicated to the launching of all levels and ranges of IRBMs and ICBMs (intermediate range and intercontinental ballistic missiles). Intelligence also knew that those missile heads could and likely did have a full inventory of chemical, biological, atomic, and nuclear destructive capabilities. Along with this grand display of killing power were tens of thousands of troops, on both sides of the border, always engaging in maneuvers and other such games in an attempt to intimidate, force an error, gain some bragging rights, or just mark and remark each one's territory. It was a magnificent training ground of photographic opportunities for a bunch of neophyte imagery interpreters at Fort Holabird, Maryland.

The photography was not limited to zoom-in shots from twenty miles up. We also had SLAR (side-looking angle radar) and heat-sensing radar photography. These two methodologies enabled us to keep our planes in our own air space on the west side of the border and still get great imagery on the east side of the border. In addition, heat-sensing radar photography enabled us to gain intelligence about Russian equipment, even when there was heavy cloud cover or the equipment was parked beneath a heavy cover of pine trees in the Bavarian Alps, or simply covered with camouflage netting which changed the shape and surface of the object beneath the blanket. But as soon as the Russians would use or move any of those items on the ground, thus creating a little heat, we had them nailed. Our heat-sensing photography could tell from the simple exhaust patterns on a vehicle how big it was, where and how fast it was moving, what piece it was, and so forth. It was a great invasion of privacy. I suspect we have a judge or two today who would probably not want us to use that method of intelligence gathering. We might not be playing fair with the enemy. Oh, dear.

At that time, twenty-six weeks was the longest single course of instruction in the Army. At the conclusion, we were well prepared . . . and needed. We were told that our class of twenty-four would nearly double the number of imagery interpreters in the U.S. military. There were some great jobs out there, and we even got to be a little bit of the decision-making process. There were job interviews and everything. I had one interview that will always remain in my memory. Well, not the interview so much as going to and from the interview location. I was told to report to the orderly's desk at the front door of our classroom building in my army greens (fairly dressy). A few minutes later, a black limousine pulled up and stopped; a sergeant/driver got out, opened the back door, and asked me to get in. Okay, this is cool. He then proceeded to pull down blinds all around the back seat and raised a divider between the back and front seat. (He did leave a light on.) This was not so cool. About forty-five minutes later, the vehicle pulled up in front of another building, right next to the door, and the

sergeant told me to stay in my seat. He then came around and opened the door, and I took not more than three steps into the adjacent building. The short hallway was nondescript, as was the room where the interview was to be conducted. The sergeant told me to have a seat and someone would be with me shortly. Shortly proved to be a matter of seconds. Maybe they were afraid I would steal an ashtray. A light colonel (that's a lieutenant colonel, one rank below a "bird" colonel. Got it?) entered the room; I stood and saluted, he returned the salute, told me to be at ease and to take a seat. I sat. I believe the interview went well. It was interesting, cordial, and informative. It was not, however, quite so informative that I was ever told exactly where I was. I have my suspicions, but to this day, I still don't know. We returned to Holabird in the same limo, with the same sergeant, in the same darkened back seat. Where was that car in college, when I really needed it?

A few days later, the major in charge of the Imagery Interpretation Instruction Group invited me to his office and offered me a job as a member of his faculty. I would be the only lieutenant. All the rest were captains and above. I was thrilled. I accepted immediately. I liked the academic atmosphere, I liked Fort Holabird, and I liked Baltimore. It was sort of like a friendly little family, on a friendly little post, right between a steel mill and a brewery. What more could anyone want?

Towards the end of my 26-week class in Imagery Interpretation, my company commander sent his orderly to my class with instructions to report to the captain immediately. I entered his office and he informed me that I had an emergency phone call. He handed me the phone; my father-in-law was on the other end. He asked if I was sitting down and then proceeded to tell me that my father had just passed away from a heart attack. I was stunned. I had had no awareness of dad feeling ill, and I believed him to be in generally good health.

Arrangements were made for a few days of emergency leave, and we traveled back to Urbana for the gathering of my parents' friends and other family members. My mother had passed away three years earlier, and being the only child I felt rather alone. But those closest to my father stepped up to fill that void, foremost among those being my Uncle Earl Schneider and Vance Brand, perhaps Dad's closest lifetime friend.

"Uncle" Vance was an attorney practicing law in Washington, D.C., with some previous stints in government positions. It was Vance who had invited my dad to join him when Vance was appointed by President Eisenhower to form a new government agency known as the Development Loan Fund (DLF). The agency still exists today, its name changed to the Agency for International Development (AID) by President Kennedy. The fund's purpose was to provide monetary and technical assistance for developing and third world countries, primarily in the field of agriculture. Any country, anywhere, cannot emerge very far until they can feed their people. Dad brought to his appointed job an interesting combination of finance (he was VP of Champaign National Bank and CEO of Kirby Hatcheries) along with extensive knowledge and contacts in the poultry husbandry business. The two country boys from Champaign County represented our government well, and as I remember them both, probably shared some great times together as they traveled the world spending the government's money.

With the end of the Eisenhower administration, Dad returned to Kirby Hatcheries and Uncle Vance returned to Washington, where he lived with his spouse, Katherine (Aunt Kat) Brand. She was a close and dear friend of my mother's and was about to play a role in my life, as though she had just adopted me.

After a few days back in Urbana, it was time to report back to my active duty station. I returned to Fort Holabird to finish my course of study, leaving Kirby Hatcheries in the strong hands of Russ

Robison and Kirby Farms under the capable guidance of Bob Jones. My stepmother Corinne was every bit as devastated as was I, and was holding together the home at 590 Scioto Street as best she could.

Less than a week after my return, I met with my company commander, who informed me that I had a critical M.O.S. (Military Occupational Specialty), and that there was no way I would be able to receive an early termination of my active tour of duty; no hardship release, sickness, mental impairment . . . no nothing.

Meanwhile, just down the road a piece, in Washington, D.C., Aunt Kat was having a couple of tables of bridge one afternoon with a few of her closest friends. Among that group was Mrs. Elvis J. Stahr, wife of the Secretary of the Army. Aunt Kat was sharing my difficulties with the other ladies, no doubt over punch and cookies and between hands of bridge. A few days later, I was again asked to leave my classroom immediately, this time being so instructed by the adjutant of the post commandant. I was to report to the commandant's office forthwith. Under normal circumstances, it is not a good thing to be asked to report to the commandant anywhere, and especially at Fort Holabird.

The commandant at Fort Holabird was General Garrison B. Coverdale, a World War II veteran and was rumored to be a survivor of the Bataan death march. He was a very tough bird, complete with a very squeaky and high pitched voice. However, no one made fun of his voice, or anything else for that matter. As the story went, at some point on the nearly 100-mile forced march, during which thousands of American soldiers died of heat stroke, starvation, bayonetings, shootings, decapitations, and so forth, General Coverdale received a Japanese rifle butt to his neck, mostly destroying his voice box. (Other accounts say the Bataan story is apocryphal and the voice the result of a kick from a horse or mule at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma.) In any case, he was a no-nonsense commander who had the complete respect of the troops under his command at all times, then and now.

So I reported to the General's orderly, who shortly escorted me into the General's office. I snapped to attention and rendered my hand salute, and the General responded with "At Ease" . . . and "Have a seat . . . son." H-m-m. Have a seat, son. Very interesting. He then proceeded to ask me a number of questions about myself, my army career thus far, about my dad, the family businesses, and so forth. I am confident he already knew most of the information, but it was his way of checking me out. After about fifteen minutes of this casual conversation, he informed me that he had received a phone call from the Secretary of the Army, requesting that he consider giving me a hardship release. The General had reviewed my case and had decided that he would do so. He did ask me if I would be able to stay the final three weeks of my class work in order to complete the course in Imagery Interpretation. Note: he ASKED me. I of course stammered that I would be happy to do so. It was several months later that I heard about the bridge party and was able to put all of this together.

At the graduation ceremony for my class, the military band played, some visiting dignitary made a few remarks, and the General personally handed out all of the diplomas. My name was called. I walked across the stage to within two paces of the General and gave him my snappiest salute. He handed me my diploma, shook my hand, and then held it for just a moment as he said not just his perfunctory, "Congratulations, Lieutenant," but also added, "Good luck back home, son." Included with his verbal gesture was, I believe, an ever-so-slight wink of his eye; the eye that could not be seen by the audience.

The persona of the tough, grizzled veteran and survivor was maintained for everyone in that room . . . except for me. It was a moment I will never forget and will cherish always.

The chapter heading tells you that this chapter is not about me. However, this picture is of me carrying the ball for the Urbana Hillclimbers. It is one of the rare occasions when my lifetime quarterback, Hobe Neiswander, actually let me have the ball! We are still good friends, but no one seems to know why.

GREAT ATHLETES ARE FUNNY PEOPLE

In my lifetime, I have been privileged to know, play with, and go drinking with three exceptional athletes. All three were highly proficient in nearly all sports, but each chose his niche and pursued it with success at the professional level.

Like most young boys, I grew up with a gang of my neighborhood buddies, and we played all the sports, based upon the season of the year; fall was football, winter was basketball, and spring was baseball. When we started grade school, our group expanded to include similar groups from other neighborhoods. So it was that we played tackle football on the graveled playground of Central Ward

School on East Court Street in Urbana. (The old school site is now the location of the Brown Publishing Company.)

If you've never been tackled on gravel, you may not know that it is not good for the elbows or knees. But it does create a certain toughness for playing the game in later years.

As one's boy-time athletic career progresses, one ultimately reaches the pinnacle of small town sporting endeavors – the local high school football team. Throughout the Midwest, including that hotbed of high school football called the State of Ohio, and especially in Urbana, Ohio, football was king. In Urbana, it was a singular thrill just to suit up in the maroon and white of the Urbana Hillclimbers on Friday nights.

The first great athlete to come into my life was during my sophomore year at UHS. His name was George Scott and he moved to Urbana to live with his uncle Paul Scott, an earlier Urbana High School athletic legend. George was starting his junior year when he arrived in Urbana that summer, and his high school athletic reputation had been made playing basketball for his small hometown team in southern Ohio. Prior to Urbana, George had never played in a regular football game.

Well, his simple lack of experience did not deter our athletic director, Paul Cook, and our head football coach, Tom Watson, from convincing George that he should try out for the Hillclimber football team. Coach Watson had played for Urbana a decade or two earlier and went on to start for the Ohio State Buckeyes. Paul Cook could make any young athlete believe that he was "faster than a speeding bullet" and could "leap tall buildings in a single bound." Needless to say, Watson, Cook, and others, including George's uncle Paul, convinced him to try out for the high school football team.

George was a tall, black, handsome youngster with an athletic body and a wondrous smile. He was personable and had a great sense of humor. He was instantly one of the guys. I will never forget his first locker room encounter with football gear. On the first day of practice with pads, George had a little trouble with the hip pads. It seems as though back in those days, football hip pads also had a hard plastic extension to cover part of the tailbone. George initially put it on backwards, apparently thinking the long flat extension was a crotch guard. It just goes to show that George was not stupid and certainly had his priorities in proper order.

The Urbana 'Climbers had just come off an eight-win-and-one-loss record the previous year, and the veteran backfield was all pretty much in place. But Coach Watson was already taken with George; he also thought George had enough overall backfield talent that it would be good to have two rotating backfields, with the second group of four, including George, being dubbed his "pony" backfield. The "ponies" included two juniors, George Scott and Chuck (Lawrence) Chapman, plus my lifetime friend and quarterback Hobe Neiswander, and myself at wingback. Chuck was our fullback and George was the tailback.

So here came the first game, a pre-season football festival, where four teams were invited to play at the same field, on the same night, with each team playing one other for just a half game. The evening was a Friday night on our home field in Urbana, and we played the second half game against Covington.

It was about 9:00 p.m. on an early September evening, and we had just won the coin toss and had chosen to receive the ball. Our receiving team was gathered around Coach Watson, who in his great wisdom had decided to put George in the center deep back receiving position. George was flanked

on either side by two other deep backs (I was on George's left). I think we other two were there primarily for window-dressing, and perhaps to help point George in the right direction.

Now remember, this was George's first real action in game uniforms, under the lights, with the stands full of fans from four different schools. We were in our sideline huddle ready to take the field to receive the ball. Coach Watson finished his little pep talk and then, with all of us standing there, looked straight at George and said to him, "Now George, when you get the ball, all I want you to do is just run it down to the other end of the field. Okay?" George said, "Gotcha, Coach." Everybody laughed, and we broke the huddle and trotted onto the field. Tom Watson always had a knack of relaxing us all in uptight situations, and for myself, a sophomore in my first varsity regular game, in front of 5000 fans, it did the trick.

It must have also worked for George. The whistle blew and the kickoff was straight and high down the middle of the field, with George receiving it on about the five yard line. Joe Gardner and I were on either side of George as he caught the ball, just in case he fumbled. He didn't. He started up the middle of the field behind the "wedge" formed by our linemen, veered toward the Urbana stands on his right, reached the fifty yard line, and was momentarily surrounded by a couple of Covington's quickest defensive backs. No sweat! In front of the home crowd, George gave them his best basketball move, kicked it into overdrive, and, per his instructions, carried the ball down to the other end of the field.

The band was playing, the team was happy, the home crowd was ecstatic, and Coach Watson was standing on the sideline. He was not happy. There had been a penalty flag thrown and the play would be repeated. George was trotting along the sideline back to the other end of the field, and as he passed Coach Watson, he smiled at our coach and asked, "Is that what you mean, Coach?"

By mid-season, George was the starting tailback for both Urbana backfields. Coach Watson and George Scott went on that year to lead Urbana High School to an undefeated season and a top 10 state ranking in what was then a single ranking with only one division for all schools in the state. George went on to star in college at Miami of Ohio and was drafted into the NFL by the New York Giants.

All of my favorite running backs are free spirits. Such was the case with George Scott, and such was the case with Tom Matte. I first met Tom during my junior year, his sophomore year, at Ohio State. I was rush chairman for my fraternity, and I had traveled to Cleveland to "rush" this soon-to-be hero for the Ohio State football Buckeyes. Tom lived on the east side of Cleveland and had gained All-Ohio honors at Shaw High School. He was to be followed in such honors by his younger brother Bruce, who is still regarded by all who know both of them as the better quarterback of the two. But Tom always seemed to be at either the right place at the right time or the wrong place at the wrong time, depending on who's telling the story. Clearly both sons inherited their athletic talent from their father, Joe, a no-nonsense type of guy and a former Canadian pro hockey player with the nose to prove it. Obviously, their mother was eligible for sainthood at an early age.

So I visited with the family and then asked Tom if we could take a few minutes for some one-on-one time and where could we go to do so. He said he had just the place. We ended up at a nearby storefront building that was dark, dingy, and smoke-filled – a place where a bunch of guys with stringy hair, t-shirts with a pack of cigarettes rolled under the sleeve, and a beer bottle in one hand were just sort of hangin' out. Well, of course, Matte walked in the door and it was celebrity time. He worked the crowd while they surveyed me to decide whether I would be permitted to leave with all of my body parts. This was not exactly what I had in mind. This was not good ol' frat-boy rushing; this

was more like survival. Somehow or other, we managed a conversation, and some months later Tom Matte pledged Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity and became an active and thus a brother.

There are innumerable funny stories about Tom and Woody and fraternity, all good for a separate chapter. My favorite centers around the year that we both were in Baltimore during his rookie season with the Colts and my year of additional education (advanced degree?) at the United States Army Intelligence School in the lovely Baltimore suburb of Dundalk, Maryland. You can tell by the name it's a real winner. The post was located on Holabird Avenue and thus named Fort Holabird. How creative. It also included the school for a couple hundred additional students, largely ne'er-do-wells and misfits. This branch was known as the CIA. These are weird people. The rest of us were quite normal, at least by comparison.

Matte liked it at the post. I think it was his escape from the rigors of practicing with the Colts. The Colts were beginning their great years, with the likes of Johnny Unitas, Raymond Berry, Artie Donovan, Gino Marchetti (biggest head I ever saw on a man, but I never said that to him!), and a host of more Hall-of-Famers. Enter the hot-shot from Ohio State. Shoot, he could handle this deal; after all, he survived four years with Woody.

We arrived in Baltimore just before the start of football season, and I got in touch with Tom, who was not yet married to Judy, and thus was, shall we say, "foot-loose and fancy-free?" Well, we got together, and since Tom had no other friends outside of the Colts, he handed me his two gratis season tickets for that year's schedule. Now this was not some idle gesture. Colts tickets were like Packers tickets are today, handed down from generation to generation. This time, I was at the right place at the right time. However, there was a price to pay. It seems as though Tom was also eligible for the military draft at that time, and Vietnam was just beginning to heat up. Tom also had an ulcer, which made him 4-F, meaning low on the draft list. However, if his ulcer went away, as ulcers should do with good care and diet, he would become a primo draft list prospect. As always, Matte had an answer. To get through the season, the following became his weekly regimen:

Sunday: game
Monday: off
Tuesday thru Friday: football practice
Friday night: drink beer with Kirby so as to aggravate the hell out of his ulcer.
Saturday: no practice, so it was recovery day for the aggravated 4-F ulcer.
Sunday: game

Neat schedule, huh? Well, those Friday nights went something like this: often dinner, sometimes at home, sometimes off-post, often at the officers' club at Fort Holabird. For it was at the officers' club at Fort Holabird that every Friday night was NICKEL BEER NIGHT! Got the picture? Boy, did we have some good times!!! Here's Matte, getting his ulcer taken care of, cheaply, and here I am with two season tickets to the Colts. And they weren't just any seats. We showed up for the first game and followed the directional markers at old Memorial Stadium, through the undercroft, up the tunnel, into the sunlight, hang a right, turn up the steps, go about 20 rows, and plop down on . . . get this . . . the forty yard line! We're seated amongst the players' wives and families. "Why hello, Mrs. Marchetti, so nice to see you." "Hi, Mrs. Donovan, how much raw meat did Artie eat this week?" "Oh we're just friends of Matte . . . oh, Tom Matte . . . uh, number 41 . . . well, he's a rookie . . . Ohio State . . . position? Hell, I don't know, whatever's left over, I guess . . . wing back, running back, blocking back, flanker, receiver." Yep, he played them all, plus a brief stint at quarterback; a stint forever memorialized in the NFL Hall of Fame. And that's why our fraternity brother, friend, and drinking buddy in Baltimore is still

loved by everyone in that wonderful town. He played wherever they put him, never griped, and gave it his blue-collar best in that beer-drinkin' blue-collar town. They loved his work ethic on Sundays, his old-fashioned do-the-best-with-what-you've-got attitude, his spirit and determination regardless of the odds, and the fact that he bled "Colts Blue" for their hometown team.

They still love him. Forty years after his illustrious career with the Colts, you can walk into any restaurant or bar in the city of Baltimore with him, and it's just like that first time when I walked into a pool hall with Tom, in Cleveland, Ohio in 1958. It's Celebrity Time!

The third member of this trifecta of winners was yet another fraternity brother, although I had known him distantly during our high school years. Jack Nicklaus was a starting guard for the Upper Arlington High School Golden Bears basketball team. He probably also played for their golf team. I first met him when he was invited as a 16-year-old to play in an exhibition match at Urbana Country Club with Sam Snead and a couple of our local amateurs. These Sam Snead Days at Urbana were sponsored by Warren Grimes, the founder of Grimes Manufacturing Company and developer of many of the aircraft and airfield lighting systems that are still in use today. Grimes Manufacturing was to Urbana as Eli Lilly is to Indianapolis and as Bill Gates is to the world.

I must admit, I was not terribly impressed with the young Mr. Nicklaus during his appearances in Urbana for Sam Snead Day. After all, he played for Arlington, arch-rivals of Urbana in the Central Buckeye League. Arlington was the largest school in the league at that time and Urbana was the smallest. Arlington was usually competitive and often the winner in league competitions. That's why we always took particular delight in knocking off the Golden Bears. So it was that I thought back then, "Boy, would I like to get that Nicklaus on the football field!"

As fate would have it, that happened several years later, on our fraternity flag-football team. We were on the same team. Well, guess who got to be quarterback? La-dee-dah: Nicklaus. Apparently, even though he did not play high school football, all the guys from Columbus, most of whom were All-CBL and All City, thought that Jack was the best. Okay, so we'll just step back, play our wingback position, and see what he can do. Answer: He could do it all! He could pass the ball 40 yards like a laser and put it on the numbers, punt the ball 50 yards with gobs of hang-time, and run a quarterback keeper around end, simply outrunning most of the defense with those stovepipe legs churning up yardage. The ground thundered. It apparently thundered across the OSU recreation fields to Ohio Stadium, where one Woody Hayes heard some stories about Jack's football prowess, particularly punting. The story goes that at one point in time Woody and Jack's dad, Charlie, got together and discussed Jack and football, and the consensus was that perhaps he had a better career opportunity in golf. I could have told them that!

Later that same year, six members of our pledge class got together and entered the OSU campus-wide volleyball league and tournament. Jack and I were both on that team, along with Deck Webb from Columbus North and Pat Morin, Dave McCandlish, and Mike Benis from Bexley. I think I was the token non-townee. We had never played together before, and most of everyone's experience was with a basketball, not a volleyball. Oh well, it's still for good old Phi Gamma Delta. So we won our league, and then, in the tournament, we beat the team composed of the active members of the fraternity to which we were pledges. This was not a politically good thing to do. But redemption was just around the corner. We made it to the University Finals, where we were up against those mean spirited, nasty, uppity bunch of face-men, the Betas . . . as in Beta Theta Pi!

The Betas also had put together a rather imposing team, including Mt. Vernon's very own sixth man on the OSU Varsity basketball team, Richie Hoyt, (not Rich, but Richie . . . how appropriate), and

another starter from the OSU Varsity Basketball Team, a kid by the name of Lucas, (Jerry . . . not Gerald.) So much for the bad news. The good news was that, in a titanic struggle with most of our active chapter on the sidelines cheering for their pledge team, we beat them. The same two teams, with all six members intact, met again in the finals for the next two years, and we beat them all three times: 1958-1959-1960. You may recall that Jerry Lucas had a similar experience in the NCAA finals during the same three years, managing to win only one of three finals. If he had been a FIJI he would have no doubt been able to bring back three National Championship banners to be hung in St. John Arena for posterity. But no, he wanted to be with Richie . . . .

Oh yes, we were talking about Jack. Jack's athletic endeavors were well known within the fraternity house, but his world-class reputation as a big game hunter and fisherman had yet to be established. At Phi Gamma Delta he may have been the reigning National Amateur Golf Champ, but in the woods on the Kirby Farm in Champaign County, Ohio, he was just another hunter, and not very visible at that. This was in the fall of 1959, when two fraternity brothers, Jack and OSU golf team member Bob Obetz, were invited over to Urbana to go hunting. It was a somewhat cold and windy day with the ground frozen and a light dusting of snow around the trees and brambles in our woods. Jack showed up at our house in sneakers and a white windbreaker. Not good. My dad got a big kick out of this and outfitted Jack with hunting boots, hunting jacket, and a red hat. I'm not certain this is the fashion statement Jack wanted to make, but my dad thought he should be wearing things a little different in color from the white snow on the ground.

We went hunting for the rest of the morning and then made the short drive over to the Urbana Country Club for lunch in the club grill room. Dad said to charge it to him, so we had a couple beers (or more) during lunch. It was about time to head back into town when our table was visited by Tubby Geuy, former Urbana Club Pro and frequenter of the bar in the grill room. Tubby saw me and my two unidentified friends and came over to say hello.

We were hot to get going, so no introductions were made as we started towards the door. Tubby was persistent, wanting to get a drink out of us and finally challenging us to a driving match from the adjacent first tee; losers each buy the winner a drink. Obviously, Tubby was counting on no less than three drinks! Still no introductions.

Tubby was a gracious host on the first tee, offering to tee off first to show the way for the others. The ground was frozen and the roll gave Tubby a drive in excess of 300 yards.

I was next, and my roll got me to 270, give or take. Obetz drove one out very close to Tubby, not quite overtaking him. Up stepped Jack. He grasped Tubby's driver, took one practice swing, and SMACK! We were looking at a sub-orbital projectile. It landed about where Tubby's ball had finished, bounced past the traps, and finished on the fringe of the green. Tubby knew he had been had, but didn't know by whom. It is then that Jack extended his hand and said, "Hi, I'm Jack Nicklaus." Tubby roared with the rest of us and my memory says that we had one more round in the Grill. Tubby bought.

Ned's best tough guy look, for football programs,
the high school yearbook, and so on..

In 2006: Jim Bean, Ned, Joe Berwanger, Mike Miller, Jack Nicklaus, Jerry Gould, Tom Matte, Jack Lucks.
Ned says: "How very special it was to have seven of my fraternity brothers at our retirement party.
I apologize to everyone else if their remarks embarrassed anyone besides me."

It is especially nice when good friends become role models for your children. Out son Ned stands with Jack Nicklaus to the left and Tom Matte to the right. Young Ned still struggles with the game of golf but has had greater success in emulating Jack in the game of life. When Ned played for the Urbana Hillclimbers, he chose to wear number 41, in honor of the number that Tom Matte wore at Ohio State and with the Baltimore Colts. He didn't even consider wearing my old UHS number 11!

ROUNTUIT

Rountuit, as in I'm going to get a "rountuit." I plead guilty. Far too many times I have said, or thought, "I will get around to it." Those of my generation are keenly aware of this disease. Those of my children's generation are still too young to be aware of the consequences.

I have experienced numerous rountuits throughout my entire life. It is the latter ones, however, that have brought with them consequences. A rountuit happens when something doesn't get done at the time one thinks of it, or soon thereafter, almost always because there is not enough time – or so the perception goes. The problem in later years is that there REALLY ISN'T enough time for even the thought of a rountuit. The consequences are much too great.

A case in point: I just received a Christmas note from the wife of one of my oldest friends. They have lived for years in San Diego, and we have talked for years about getting together. Wendy and I will be traveling west this coming summer, now that we are retired, and San Diego is one of our stops. Wendy has a brother and family there, and I have a couple of old Taco Bell Corporate friends living there. Sadly, we will not be able to see my oldest friend among the San Diego group. His wife's note told me of his passing last fall. Bob led a good and productive life as an M.D., as a husband and father, and as one of my fraternity brothers from Ohio State.

His wife Diane's note reminded me of his several-year struggle with a rare kidney disease. While he was on the waiting list for a transplant, he never reached the number one position on that list, and thus we lost him because he never became number one. How can that be?!!! Everything I ever knew about Bob was #1.

I first met him during summer rush at his home in Chillicothe, Ohio. (Well, maybe Chillicothe is not so much a number one.) But maybe you have to be a number one just to get out of "Chilly" and go to college. Bob was clearly not the average kid from any Ohio small-town high school. He was highly involved in numerous non-athletic activities, well thought of by his high school staff and faculty, and incredibly bright. His lack of athletic involvement was largely influenced by the fact he had only one good eye. I can't remember whether that was from birth, or an accident, or what, but it never seemed to hinder his achievements in Chillicothe, at Ohio State, and thereafter.

Diane's note made me incredibly sad, followed by anger, and then a guilt trip. How could Bob have been lost because of a waiting line? A man whose life was dedicated to saving others, and yet he was unable to overcome the bureaucracy of part of the system in which he worked his entire adult life. All of this was followed, of course, with anger at myself for never quite being able to squeeze in a visit, even briefly, when in southern California. Inexcusable, unforgiveable, no excuses: coulda-woulda-shoulda, but it never happened.

My bond with Bob began when we became roommates for a couple of quarters at the FIJI house at 218th East 17th Avenue, just a few blocks east of campus. We were in a triple those two quarters, and the third member of our group was Dan Duncan from Upper Arlington, a Columbus suburb. Dunc and Bob also hit it off quite well. They had a lot in common. Dunc also had only one eye, the result of a high school automobile accident when he was driving in a less than sober condition. Dunc was also a certified genius with an I.Q. above 140. It was Dunc who, during high school, sent a little hand-

drawn set of sketches of his idea for a new type of car transmission to General Motors. GM's engineering department sent him a nice thank-you note, a big yawn towards his idea, but did offer to send him a little scholarship for his effort and imagination. Oh yes, they also asked him to sign a little paper signing over the rights, etc., to his idea. It was a few years later that General Motors rolled their latest model cars off the assembly line with, yep, you guessed it, a brand-new transmission. Many of you will remember the newly redesigned GM Hydra-Matic transmission of that era. Well, now you know the rest of the story.

Our third-floor room at the FIJI House was thus well known and even noteworthy for our various physical abnormalities. I also fit right in, the result of a modest surgical process that summer to remove a pilonidal cyst slightly above my sphincter, thus leaving me with two holes in my posterior, albeit one was sewn shut. It was with great pride, during the first week of that fall quarter, that our engineering major Duncan got out his little drafting kit and lettered a sign for our room door. Its creativity was only exceeded by its crudity.

THREE GUYS
FOUR EYES
FOUR ASS-HOLES

But my, how I would have enjoyed revisiting those days with Bob. They were special times, almost an age of innocence – a time when a couple of small-town Ohio kids shared a room with a kid from an affluent Columbus suburb whose bubble was always a little off-center.

One other "rountuit" has already haunted me for years and will likely never leave me. Bill Figueroa was my closest friend within the franchise community of Taco Bell restaurants. We met when the two of us were elected as franchisee representatives on the national council for franchisees. It was known as FRANMAC, meaning Franchisee-Management Advisory Council. "Fig" was the only member of this newly formed group who had previously been a Taco Bell Corporation employee, having served as a franchise consultant for one of their western U.S. districts. As such he brought an insider's perspective to the table on our behalf, an invaluable asset for our fledgling group. Shortly after the formation of FRANMAC, I was elected its president (nobody else was dumb enough to accept), and Fig became my personal confidant and constant sounding board. As time passed, I suspect Corporate viewed us as co-conspirators.

Between the two of us, we shared the presidency of FRANMAC for its first five years of existence, many of those years being difficult, trying, and incredibly frustrating. Oh yes, Fig and I also shared one additional distinguishing characteristic. Our hairlines were identical. On occasion, we were known to put our arms around each other, bow our heads together toward the audience, and announce that we were doing an imitation of Dolly Parton. (It was all his idea!) Fig and I developed a camaraderie that only comes from having shared a foxhole together. Such is the way it was when we were attempting to herd our franchise community through what often seemed to be a corporate minefield.

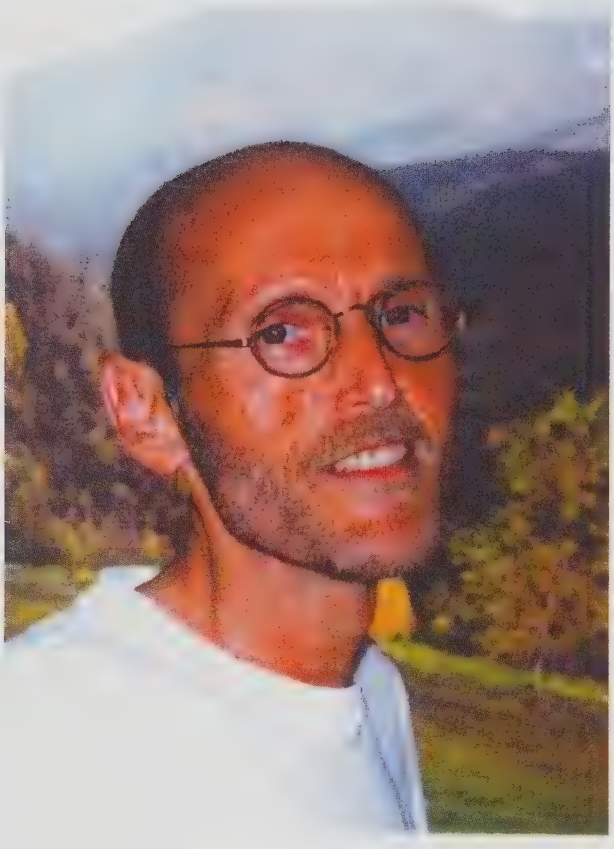
On the other hand, our corporate counterparts knew our difficulties, and even though they were often the source of our heartburn, we were able to work together to overcome difficulties and challenges for the betterment of our company. In short, we needed each other. Fig was also invaluable in this arena. He was already well-known and greatly respected by his former employers. Even so, I always teased him about the fact that they owed him one because they unloaded on him the Taco Bell restaurants for all of Alaska when Fig told them he wanted to buy a group of stores and become a franchisee. Why not Portland and Seattle, or Sacramento, or Tacoma and Spokane? Nope,

they sold Fig a group that included wonderful markets such as Anchorage, Fairbanks, Ketchikan, Juneau, and a little island town where the Federal Government had promised to have a bridge built to it . . . some day. And the greatest irony of all was that Fig hated the cold. I mean HATED it!

But Fig also had a great affinity for Alaska. He could work his way through his stores by day and then kick his shoes off, pour a great single malt scotch for one hand, and light up a first-rate Cuban stogie for the other hand. He was also quite adept in this exercise from the stern of a salmon-fishing vessel while cruising amongst the many estuaries and fjords of those cold Alaskan waters. Wherever Fig was, and whatever he did, he was a man's man – and a friend's friend.

On numerous occasions over the years, Fig invited me to go salmon fishing with him in Alaska. I always had a reason to put it off, far too many times, always promising that I would get rountuit. That day never came. Whether it was the top-of-the-line Cuban cigars or something else that caught up with Fig, I'll never know. He ultimately lost a lengthy battle with cancer, albeit with his spirit intact throughout the entire ordeal. Wendy and I flew to the west coast for his service, a service attended by most of his friends from his years with Taco Bell. Many franchisees and nearly every single member of Taco Bell's senior management staff were there. You see, even though Fig's latter years within the system were spent representing the interests of the franchise community, he was always able to maintain corporate's respect – and their love. They really did love him. He was still one of them, just as he was one of us. It was therefore not an irony that his eulogy was given by his long-time close friend and occasional adversary, Executive Vice President for Taco Bell Zane Leshner.

As Zane spoke, I remembered the many times Fig and I sat down with him across the bargaining table, when Zane would give us the latest gospel lesson according to St. John. (Zane was the right arm of Taco Bell President, John Martin.) On this day, there was no table of separation. Zane spoke for us all. He told a few of the many Fig stories. We laughed together, cried together, and reminisced about those times shared by us all. As Zane finished his remarks, he raised an empty, cupped hand heavenward, and proposed a final toast to Fig, "with a pour of only the finest of Scotch." Wherever Fig is today, I'm confident there is available the best of Scotch, the finest of cigars – and the waters are full of Alaskan Salmon. This time, Fig . . . count me in.



Bill Figueroa . . . . He followed me in the presidency of FRANMAC, and we spent many hours over the years in meetings and on the phone, and perhaps even more time in restaurants and bars. In my years of service on this board, Fig was my closest friend, comrade, ally, and confidant. We shared the same foxhole, many times. Though often battered and bloodied, we were always able to finish the day and recoup at dinner or the bar. His always strong will and positive spirit would carry me for another day. He was a man of great faith, as evidenced by his thoughts printed beneath his picture, and it sustained us all. I still miss him.

I wonder if the soul knows when it
will be reunited with God?
I have a feeling that it does-
It prepares itself spiritually-
I feel so much closer to God these days.
Help me to love, to understand,
to give, to accept.

Bill Figueroa
9/15/45 - 5/28/96

EULOGIES

Being asked to offer an eulogy is one of life's greatest mixed blessings. Being asked to speak about one who was special in my life is, indeed, an honor. Being asked to do so in a public gathering of family and friends is an emotional challenge of the greatest proportion. Sometimes the challenge is more simply determining what to say, what not to say, and how to say it. My basic premise has always been to remember the good, and to do so without offending anyone. In the four eulogies I have been honored to give, each one was easy in terms of remembering the good. They were all wonderful people to know and each one brought light into my life.

The first was Dick Shoup, my high school music instructor, who became a lifetime mentor and friend. He was one of many who provided me counsel during the years after my parents were gone. Above all else, he instilled in me my love for music and prepared me to use whatever God-given talent I may have in sharing that music.

Jack Evans was a neighbor from across the street when we first moved to Noblesville, Indiana. He and the love of his life, Roni (also known as Muffin), brought Wendy and me the greatest of joy and friendship during our Noblesville days. That relationship was nurtured and grew until the end of Jack's life; I still mourn his passing.

George Fields was the husband of one of our Taco Bell restaurant managers. We bonded because of our mutual interest and desire to help his wife Bonnie succeed in her management endeavors. George was always outspoken, sincere, sometimes meddlesome, but always kind-hearted and supportive of Bonnie. We admired and respected one another greatly, and my regard for him grew immensely when he offered to speak for me against a union-organizing effort at another of our restaurants. You see, at the time he did so, he was the president of a union local for the UAW in Fort Wayne! Love and respect sometimes find strange bedfellows.

Cathie Mathewson was one of our "projects" during our Taco Bell days. She was our first restaurant manager in Florida and managed that Gainesville restaurant until she was unable to physically get there because of the ravages of cancer. She had little love in her life, and no support other than what she received from our company. She took great pride in her restaurant and its achievements. She had little family, and her marriages were, shall we say, less than successful. I was previously honored by her when she asked me to perform the duties of "Father of the Bride," giving her away in what proved to be her last marriage. Cathie's spirit always could light the room. Her loyalty and affection for Wendy and me and our company always made her presence quite special. Life dealt her the most difficult of hands, but she fought and struggled to make the most of what life gave her. She was one of God's gifts to us, and I have no doubt that He called her back to him to give her the love and peace in heaven that she never could quite find on earth.

I have also included a memorial that I wrote to share with our company and a few other Taco Bell friends. It was about a fellow franchisee, Mike Kentris. Mike was always another ray of sunshine, and I always enjoyed sitting and drinking with him and listening to his stories about how it used to be. I have often been accused of similar story-telling, but after you read about Mike, you will know that I learned to tell stories at the feet of the master. He was an American original and represented what was good about the Taco Bell business.

DR. E. RICHARD SHOUP

IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES

Permit me to take you on a journey, back some fifty years, to a small town in west central Ohio. The economy had recovered from the depression of the thirties, the food rationing of the early forties was a thing of the past, and the Second World War was still fresh in our minds. Things were still a little difficult, but we didn't know that. After all, we were just kids.

America had won the "war to end all wars," and now we could eat all that we wanted of strawberries, butter, eggs, meat, and . . . ice cream. There was even this new gadget that seemed intriguing to us, although nobody had one . It was called television, but back then, there was so much else to do . . . and so it was . . . the best of times.

Well, little did we know that those times were about to get even better. For those of us in elementary school, we started the next year with a new music teacher. Her name was Mrs. Shoup and for all us young boys, she was, by today's definition, a *fox*. We really couldn't understand how the new high school music teacher had ever been able to capture her heart. But never mind, she was ours five days a week. And so started our music education and our love affair with the Shoups.

Sharlene made us believe that a flutophone was the greatest thing since sliced bread. She taught us the melodic line, then introduced harmony, and usually got more harmony than was written. And, naturally, she was our first choir director.

Little did we know that this was all part of a sinister plot. Apparently that man at the high school, the one who claimed to be the husband of Mrs. Shoup, had made a deal with her. She was to recruit, organize, and train the voices of us younger students, and then he would inherit all of her efforts and take all the credit. And so, with a waggle of his baton (which somehow or other often found its way into a pencil sharpener), out would come this glorious sound from hundreds of voices, all to the credit of Dick Shoup and the hard work of Sharlene Shoup.

And so time passed, and it was still the best of times. We made it to junior and senior high school and discovered that the man in Mrs. Shoup's life was really not such a bad guy; he laughed a little and clearly loved what he was doing. It became infectious. Freshman and sophomore choruses were a continuing part of our musical heritage.

The high school choir became a polished organization, even singing once under the baton of Dr. Ellis Emanuel Snyder, director of Capital University's famed Chapel Choir. My, how Shoup swelled with pride on that day. And there were quartets and octets and even a boy's glee club known as the Castleaires. It was a commitment of time and energy that was successful only because of Shoup's love for his subject matter and his quest for perfection from those of us whom he continually challenged.

He always knew we could do better . . . and we did. He seemed to know exactly how to play us . . . and he did. We learned that with commitment and dedication we too could do better than we thought possible. We

learned that a strong work ethic, manifesting itself in repetition after repetition, always seemed to get the job done. How many of you remember him saying, "Okay now, just one more time," or "Okay now, let's take it again from the top." And so it was that we learned from our teacher . . . who became our mentor . . . and later our friend.

Let there be no doubt in anyone's mind . . . he was the man . . . he was in charge. He may have looked a little silly at times, with his pencil-sharpened baton, but that too was a spirit of the times. And nobody brought those times forward to the present better than Shoup. Many of us enjoyed his company in recent years because his always-sharp memory and quick wit would recall the fun times as well as the accomplished times. I'm certain he realized, even back then, that fun and accomplishment were often one and the same.

The wondrous part of it all is that we were learning music, as well as solid values and standards of good citizenship – not just from Dick Shoup, but from the entire community. Whether it was parents, friends, neighbors, teachers, preachers, or whomever, they all played their part back then in Small Town, Midwest, U.S.A. But for the hundreds who passed through the portals of the castle on the hill, no one did it better than Dick Shoup. It was, after all, the best of times.

We occasionally hear of people in high places who worry about their legacy. As I look out today across a sea of familiar faces, I'm reminded that we, all of us, are Dick's legacy. And he knew that. He received mountains of cards, letters, and e-mails, and he was greatly aware of the fact that his legacy was not only great in size, but also great in love, with music being the common bond of that profound affection.

There is no doubt that, somewhere up there, Dick thinks he's still in charge and can't quite wait to get his hands on his baton and say to us . . . "Okay now, just one more time." Well, Shoup, we're gonna have that one more time . . . and yes, you get to lead. So when we join together for the singing of the benediction, and we reach the crescendo of that final great amen, let us remember, once again, that we are here to celebrate the life of one who helped create for us all . . . the best of times.

JACK EVANS

TO MY FRIEND, JACK

We have gathered here today to celebrate the life of a husband, a father, a relative, a neighbor, and my friend Jack. I'm having trouble trying to celebrate much of anything. I feel more like being sad – and then I think of my friend, Jack.

I think of the times we shared together. No, we didn't play high school football together, nor were we college fraternity brothers, nor did we ever play golf together. These things all represented exercise, not exactly one of Jack's strong suits. Jack and I just played together.

Ours was a friendship born of living across the street from one another when Wendy and I first moved to Noblesville. It was from that beginning that Jack and I began to share a love for gourmet food, fine wines, great music, and tolerant women. We were both fortunate to have already found the loves of our lives, both of whom are exceptionally strong in the tolerance category. It was also no accident that Jack and I both believed that tolerance is a virtue that must be tested and affirmed with some regularity. So it was that we challenged one another in that exercise. Now that was the kind of exercise Jack understood.

As our friendship grew and matured, I learned more about this big teddy bear with the pretend gruff exterior. And so it was that we played off each other, as he did with many of you, trading verbal jabs, chain yanking, and one-upmanship, with an occasional testing of wifely tolerance. I remember our last social event together, a New Year's Eve black tie affair in Columbus. It was that evening when I told him he looked like the world's largest penguin, and in fact walked a little like one; he countered by suggesting that my head was the first formally dressed bowling ball he had ever seen. This was all part of the same conversation when he and Roni told us that Jack was scheduled for cancer surgery. That's just the way Jack did things.

Jack was a funny guy, with a quick wit and a natural sense for the humorous perspective of most anything. It is also my belief that Jack used his humor to avoid being too serious about some things. He didn't want those around him – whom he loved and cared for – to be worried about him or his health. He was the Big Guy, and he could handle it. This was his way of protecting all of us. On my last visit with him at the hospital, it probably embarrassed him a little when my final words to him were, "I love you, Big Guy." I just wanted to remind him of what had always been known, but not spoken.

Well, his great heart finally gave out, but I would like to believe that it was from an overload of his caring and compassion and love, all of which brought us such great joy for so many years. Whether we were children, siblings, parents, spouse, or just friends, his joy nurtured and sustained us all. That was the way he wanted it to be.

Jack made his peace some time ago. I have not yet been able to do that with the loss of my friend, Jack. So permit me to share with you a few words from poet William Blake that may help us all along that journey.

> He who binds to himself a joy,
> Doth the winged life destroy.
> He who kisses the joy as it flies,
> Lives in eternity's sunrise.

And so it will be with you, Jack. There will not be another sunrise in my life that I will not think of the joy I shared with you.

GEORGE FIELDS

George Fields was not one of my closest friends. We did not grow up together or go to school together. We never worked for the same company, and George was as much pro-union as I was anti-union. And yet we were drawn together by the strongest of magnets: we happened to share the same ethics and values that we believe make this country great.

Most importantly, it was his wife Bonnie who initially caused us to become acquainted.

Bonnie was hired by our company to manage our soon to be opened new Taco Bell and KFC restaurant in North Manchester. Bonnie was an experienced Taco Bell manager and a long-term resident of North Manchester. We were looking for a manager and she was available. We promptly hired her and shortly thereafter found out that we had also acquired a significant bonus. Bonnie was a package deal. We also got George.

We didn't know immediately that we got George. It was sort of a clandestine deal. George seemed to always be lurking somewhere in the shadows – not very visible and not very vocal. I know that it will surprise none of you to know that all of that changed over the years.

George was Bonnie's cheerleader. He was also her confidant, her advisor, her counselor and chief inspector of her restaurant. It's funny . . . I thought all of those jobs were mine.

And then I began receiving little short e-mails and occasional phone calls from George.

Suggestions . . . helpful hints . . . and a smattering of philosophy and psychology. I soon discovered that George was not the average restaurant-manager spouse, any more than Bonnie was an average restaurant manager.

Bonnie's store was repeatedly recognized for its superior operations, not only within our company, but statewide and nationally. Hers is still, to this day, one of only two stores from our company to be recognized by YUM! Brands for their prestigious "Best of the Best" Awards. This recognition placed them in the top twenty units for KFC, world-wide, and provided Bonnie and George a free trip to Hawaii.

Well, I can tell you, after that George and I were great buddies! To the extent that he shortly later offered his assistance on a serious problem we were experiencing at another of our small-town restaurants. It seemed as though we had been targeted by the United Steel Workers to attempt to organize our store in Tipton, Indiana. Why, I'll never know, but they pulled out all of the stops, with picketing, handing out flyers, small rallies and so forth. George heard about this and he was incensed. What were they thinking about? Our employees are mostly teenagers, mostly part-time, and very few in number. He figured that the union figured this store would be easy pickings, and if their campaign were successful, it would provide a launching platform to other similar stores.

George asked if he could help. He wanted to speak directly with our employees. This was no idle gesture, and for George, he was assuming some serious personal risk. You see, George was presently serving as the president of a major union local at his employer's factory in Fort Wayne, Indiana. We discussed this aspect and agreed

that he would speak, but we would not give his last name, nor where he was from. George traveled down to Tipton, we assembled all of the crew, and George held them spellbound for the better part of an hour. His heart and soul were on display. So was his mind. He was blunt and to the point in explaining what the steelworkers were doing, and why it was wrong. He talked about the union movement, why it is good, and where it is appropriate. He talked about growing up in small towns and the values that our "kids" already had as a result of their parents, friends and their community. He literally shamed the Steel Workers in front of our employees. Three days later, the union did a straw vote and found that they had only one employee in their favor – the wife of the union organizer.

They withdrew their petition for a vote . . . and never came back.

Obviously, I felt a deep sense of gratitude for George. But that is not why I am here today. I want everyone to know of my great respect for his honesty, his knowledge, his willingness to step up and be counted, his sense of the difference between right and wrong, and his ability to convey those thoughts on our behalf.

He was a stand-up kind of guy. We all knew, always, where we stood with George. He wanted the best for us, for our company, and for his Bonnie. He was, unabashedly, her greatest cheerleader, her most loving critic, and the finest "voluntary consultant" any company could ever have. He leaves an empty spot within each of us. I will personally miss his e-mails, his phone calls, and especially his urging both Bonnie and me on how to better run our North Manchester store.

I will fill my empty spot with the love and admiration that I will always have for Bonnie's husband . . . my friend . . . George.

CATHIE MATHEWSON

Cathie was our first restaurant manager when we expanded into Florida. But that is not what made her special.

Cathie continued at that original location while her restaurant doubled in volume over a few years. But that alone is not what made her special.

Cathie was with us for over a decade, managing a number of stores for us in the Gainesville, Florida, market. But all of those accomplishments together are still not what made Cathie so special to us.

What Cathie brought to us was a commitment and dedication to the task at hand and a sense of loyalty to our company and to me personally. She was always prepared to meet any challenge and give it her best shot. We all came to expect that of her, and it is a common bond that we share as we gather here today.

It was these qualities and the character that was molded around these values that made Cathie the unique individual she became for all of us.

Cathie brought with her those God-given talents that come more from the heart than the mind. It was those talents that endeared her to us and will provide a role model for those who follow in her footsteps.

It was my honor a few year ago to be asked by Cathie to be the father of the bride and to give her away in marriage. It will soon be my honor to participate in the dedication of our new restaurant on West University Avenue and the naming of the dining room as the Cathie Mathewson Dining Room.

It was in this dining room that I first met Cathie. It therefore seems appropriate that it will be this same dining room where I will be regularly reminded of this special person we knew as Cathie. I pray that in future years her children and grandchildren will come to this place to share with us our love for her and to recapture the spirit of this special child of God.

I finally pray that the Lord will bless her and keep her. That the Lord will make his face to shine upon her and be gracious unto her. And I pray that the Lord will lift up his countenance upon her, and give her . . . everlasting peace.

MIKE KENTRIS

NED SEZ

MY FRIEND MIKE

This is a terrific business. It is so because it is a "people business." We have many opportunities to meet a great diversity of people virtually every day we are on the job. Just think of the diversity of the team at your own restaurant.

Every now and then, we encounter one who is great, or perhaps interesting, or just memorable. My friend Mike was all three.

Mike passed away earlier this week. He lived in Fostoria, Ohio. I made the eight-hour round trip yesterday to pay my respects to a friend whom I met over twenty years ago. He was a special person, one who was loved by many and liked by all.

His life was not remarkable when measured by major accomplishments, but rather by the fact that there were not many things that he didn't do. His walls were not covered with plaques and other accolades, but his mind was full of experiences and friendships garnered through his 83 years of life.

Mike was a Taco Bell guy, a fellow franchisee. He began this new career when he was in his sixties. Along with one of his sons and a couple of partners, he grew their enterprise into one of the largest and most successful Taco Bell franchise organizations in the Taco Bell system. Make no mistake about it. While there were several major players in leadership roles in his company, Mike was the heart and the soul. In his spare time, this American of Greek heritage raised three sons and a daughter, including two doctors and a lawyer.

Mike graduated from high school in 1939, served in the U.S. Navy, ran a gas station, owned Burger Chef restaurants in Ohio, survived the demise of that system, and started all over again in 1982 with Taco Bell. He loved the business; and all who worked for him loved him. If you wanted to talk with Mike, you first had to listen to his latest and greatest stories about his stores and the "kids" who worked for him. Mike was into it, all the time, right up to and including his 83rd year of life.

He was also much more than just "about the business." He could keep up with the best of them, whether it was whiskey drinking, story telling, horseshoes, or dancing. And those things that he couldn't do quite as well as the next guy, he usually tried – and always had more fun than anybody else.

It was during Memorial Day weekend of this year when Mike reflected upon his life and shared with his family the following: "Boy, I've led an interesting life. I don't think I missed a damn thing!" As always, Mike said it best . . . and that's the way I'll remember him.

BOATS AND OTHER NAUTICAL STUFF

Boating started with Poppy at a fairly early age. My first boat was on the French River in Ontario, Canada. It was a ten-foot fishing boat and was powered by a Johnson Sea Horse five-horsepower motor. There were no niceties such as electric start, steering wheels, etc. Not only was this a pull-start engine, it was the real old kind where you had to wind a starter rope around the top of the engine, like a pulley. Then, while standing up, you gave the rope a mighty pull, hoping the force was enough to power up the engine. Of course, you first had to remember to turn on the fuel valve, open the air valve on the little red gas tank, and liberally choke the engine, usually until you flooded it. Flooding meant you had to re-crank the engine several times more until it would fire, and then you had to quickly sit down and rev the hand throttle to keep it running. Dad later outfitted this boat with a 7½-horsepower Evinrude with a recoil starter rope; that Evinrude really made that boat fly. The boat weighed only about 100 pounds, was built much like a canoe, and was very tippy. I don't ever remember tipping it over, but I do recall falling into the river from the boat on several occasions.

It was this boat from which I learned basic seamanship. That's BASIC. Necessary things such as how to paddle when you run out of gas, how to counterbalance the weight of the engine by placing a large rock in the bow of the boat, and how to watch your wake when boating in thick fog so as to be certain you did not just travel in a circle. I also learned to navigate. On the French River, there were no such things as channel markers. You navigated by trees and rocks and tried to avoid hitting either one. I also learned to respect the effect of large waves on little boats, and I learned how to shoot the rapids as well as the Indians. I also learned to respect shallow waters, fast water, and the numerous obstacles therein. Dad set up a little trophy wall near his workbench, where he saved my many bent and broken propellers – but only those that were damaged beyond repair. The repairable ones were hammered out until they were nearly good as new – and the engine did not vibrate too much.

EARLY LESSONS

One particular lesson will always stick in my mind, involving something I only did once. I was in the boat alone and just leaving the dock at Pine Cove Lodge. It was always sort of cool to do a slow but sharp turn in order to show off your seamanship and take a short cut into the bay between the narrowly spaced pilings supporting an overhead pedestrian bridge. After all, that was the way the Indian guides did it. No sweat.

Oops. The turn I made was a little too sharp for entering the narrow passage. The boat tipped substantially to port and dumped me into the river. With the motor still running, it proceeded in a circle until the bow of the boat came right at me. I grabbed the bow and hung on for dear life as the boat continued to make small circles. This went on for several revolutions, until my Indian buddy Clarence brought another boat alongside and turned off my engine. Besides being totally drenched and embarrassed beyond belief, I remember Dad talking to me later along the lines of, "If you want to keep your boat, don't be a show-off." (Yeah, I know; Clarence doesn't sound like much of an Indian name . . . but that was it. You'll just have to deal with it.)

My several years of boating on the French River as a kid would prove to be a life-saving experience. When I was twelve years old, I attended a two-week summer camp at Camp Sherwood on Walloon Lake, Michigan. It was a nice camp, located at the water's edge, with a central building complex and several large cabins encircling the main buildings. About half of the cabins were for boys, and the other half were for those other creatures. Each cabin included one large room for about a dozen bunks for campers and a couple more for our two counselors. Most of the counselors were college students; this was their summer job.

The second day of camp included some free time in the afternoon. The two counselors in my cabin decided it would be a good idea to take out one of the large "war" canoes so that our entire cabin could paddle down to the end of the lake and get ice cream cones. Departure time arrived, and we walked down to the boat pier and lifted our quite large canoe into the water. Everyone scrambled into the canoe, and I ended up in the next to last seat, immediately in front of one of the counselors. The other counselor was in the front seat. The distance to the end of the lake was only a couple of miles, and the width of the lake was about a half mile. The water was a little choppy, but not enough to keep several private cottager ski boaters from practicing their skiing skills. About ten minutes into the journey , some wind started kicking up the waves, blowing directly at us from the direction we were heading.

I had done a lot of boating and canoeing on the French River and experienced no discomfort from the change in the weather. Then we started to take on some water from all the spray coming into the fully loaded war canoe. With that, the two counselors decided they would head directly to the closest shore and wait it out. The only problem was that to get to shore, we would be taking all of those waves broadside. I didn't like the idea of turning 90 degrees, but said nothing. I did, however, take off my shoes and socks . . . just in case. I knew how much more difficult it would be to swim with my shoes on.

We were now heading for shore, but the wind had really kicked up, and we were taking on appreciably more water than if we had continued to head into the wind. In my opinion, we had violated a cardinal rule. Water was building up in the canoe, and it was becoming very unstable. I

unzipped my jacket. The canoe started tipping even further with the impact of each wave and I knew it was only a matter of a short time until it flipped. I was ready.

There it went; one big water-laden canoe and fourteen of us in the water in the middle of Lake Walloon. There were no life jackets in the canoe, so I kept my paddle for a little buoyancy. The canoe, being half-full of water when it flipped, continued a slow rolling motion as it went down to a depth of about three feet or so. I had experienced this before, when playing in the water with regular-sized canoes. Even so, I was a little scared because the canoe was very slow to rise. I started to wonder if maybe because it was so big it would just go ahead and sink. An eternity passed (about 15-20 seconds) before it began its very slow ascent back to the surface. It was further slowed by everyone trying to stand on it as it started to rise.

Well, not quite everyone. A couple of campers started to swim for shore, and the counselor in the stern got their attention and told them to stay with the canoe. Meanwhile, near the front of the canoe, one camper had really panicked and was thrashing in the water and screaming. The counselor in the bow went after him. At about that time the canoe was nearing the surface, and most of the rest of us were occupied with getting a good hold on the canoe. I was later told that the thrashing camper got a choke hold on the counselor as he struggled to save the camper from drowning. The sad ending is that they both drowned.

Had they been able to last just another minute, they would have been safe. We were quickly surrounded by several ski boats, all of whose passengers were throwing us life jackets, lines, and most anything else that would float. We were all quickly transferred to these other boats while several volunteers were diving, trying to find our two missing paddlers. They were unsuccessful. I do not know when the two were recovered, as we were taken directly back to Camp Sherwood, dried off, warmed up, fed well, and sent to bed early. We were also each taken to the main lodge to call home to let parents know we were okay.

Little was said about the two victims at the camp, but I learned later that it made many Midwestern newspapers and radio stations. (Television was not yet available.) This particular incident proved to be the beginning of the end for Camp Sherwood. It closed a few years later, and I am told that the facility is now owned by the University of Michigan as a summer retreat facility. (Any true Buckeye knows that Michigan always needs more places to retreat.)

HAVING FUN

Boating continued to be a major part of my life, with the next important step being my three summers in the Naval School at Culver Military Academy. I recall those years so favorably that we have also sent one of our sons, Eric, there; presently, two of our grandchildren, Kirby O'Mara and Julie Kirby, go back this summer for their first class year. We would have liked to send all of our children there, but it was too expensive for us in those earlier years. Among other things, Culver's naval program taught me how to sail and navigate with the use of charts and a compass. (In the 1950's, there were no such things as GPS's and Chart Plotters.) The knowledge I gained at Culver would become invaluable in later years as we boated in the Great Lakes and offshore in the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico.

Culver did not, however, enhance my underwater vision. I don't mean my vision when I am underwater, but rather my vision for the part of my boat that is underwater. This is particularly important when one is boating in unfamiliar waters, such as a floodplain, where the trees have been removed . . . except for the stumps. That would be Indian Lake, Ohio, site of a fraternity rush party.

A fraternity brother, Jim Purdy, also from Urbana, had volunteered his parents' lake cottage for a party during the summer of 1959. Activities for the Buckeye Fijis (Phi Gamma Delta) included tennis, volleyball, hotdogs, an eensy amount of beer drinking, and (gulp) water skiing – with my Dad's boat (double gulp). Dad's boat was a custom-made Nipissing Boat Company highly polished wooden boat. By the end of that day you would have also thought it was mahogany veneer, inlaid with marble and precious gems. That boat just didn't look real good with a stump sticking up through the bow. The good thing is that it didn't sink very far. After all, we were only in about three feet of water. The lesson learned? The spotter is to keep his eyes on the skier; the boat driver is to keep his eyes on the road.

After that experience, I had long and joyous years of boating. I shared these adventures with several boats and many friends, in Canadian and U.S. waters, as well as the Bahamas and the Gulf of Mexico. As is true with any such endeavor, there are many experiences that remain in one's memory. A handful of those are worth sharing.

Early boating times after college included houseboating on Lake Cumberland, Kentucky. We would tow our runabout behind the car all the way to Cosby Popplewell's Alligator Dock near Jamestown , Kentucky. The lake itself is manmade and is part of the depression-era TVA (Tennessee Valley Authority) project. It is part of the Cumberland River system, with headwaters in eastern Kentucky. The river continues to flow beyond the dam that creates Lake Cumberland, coursing its way into northern Tennessee. Straddling the Kentucky-Tennessee border is Dale Hollow, another man-made reservoir. The Cumberland then proceeds westward and is navigable all the way to the Ohio River. It flows through Nashville and Clarksville, Tennessee, and finishes in Barkley Lake, the last large man-made body of water, before traveling its few remaining miles from Barkley to the Ohio. Lake Barkley is the companion lake to Kentucky Lake and the two are connected by a large channel, thus creating a large point of land known as the Land Between the Lakes. How creative. I am certain the Indians could have come up with something much more descriptive than that.

Lake Cumberland was a favorite boating destination for family and friends, with a large enough group that we often tied together two forty-foot houseboats and thus accommodated fifteen to twenty

people. It was a time of good food, good booze, good water skiing, lousy fishing, and, in at least one episode, superior seamanship.

It seems as though the women always would find their way to the top deck (roof) of the houseboat when we were underway, and then show up once again when we had arrived at our destination. Naturally, that left all of the heavy work to the men for the hours-long cruise. Well, considering all that hard work of steering the boat, adjusting the bumpers, coiling the lines, and popping cans of beer, the guys were understandably getting tired of the unfair division of labor. So there we were, just entering the channel to take us the final few hundred yards to a lovely tree-covered and sandy-beached bay, capped at the end of the bay by the spectacular Seventy-Six Falls. The falls were at least 40 feet high, and probably twice as wide, falling over a large rock overhang. The falls were particularly spectacular because the overhang protruded 10 to 12 feet out from the base of the wall, leaving a large space between the rock wall and the point where the actual waterfall hit the water at boat level.

Well, the cruise had been long enough to work up a lot of beer courage, so captain and crew of the vessel decided it was time to teach those wenches a lesson. There they were, all spread out on the stern part of the roof of the boat (the front part was too windy when under way), with their cutesy little beach towels, pillows, books, and umbrella drinks, chitchatting, reading, and/or sleeping away.

Enter Captain Bligh; and some EXTREMELY superior skills of seamanship on the high seas. I slowed the boat down very gradually, as one must do when he is towing another smaller boat. I proceeded down the cove to the point where the bow was about 10 yards short of the water falls. I then very slowly and deliberately swung the boat around into a complete 180 degree turn, managing to perfectly swing the stern 20 feet of the roof right through the heart of the water fall. This also swung the engines within a couple feet of the base of the rock wall, but not to worry. The overhang of the wall was out far enough to completely inundate nearly half of the roof of the boat. My God, it got loud up there! I was denounced in terms that were not very biblical. Screaming and shouting and moving of equipment and furniture all reigned (rained?) supreme. Meanwhile, the dutiful captain and his crew were anchoring the boat, securing the bumpers, bringing the ski boat up along side, and doing those nautical things that captains and crews normally do.

Then the enemy invaded our domain. Because the ladies were quite wet, they seemed to feel the need to come downstairs and show us just how wet they were. Well, that was even better. While we did offer them our sincerest apologies and provided them with dry towels, I must admit that shortly thereafter there were a lot of high fives, rather silent cheers, and a genuine feeling of Mission Accomplished. Sadly, there were a few grudges that seemed to linger through the dinner hour, and for many of us, all through the night. As I recall, dinner was something like beer, spam and chips, and night-time activities were not memorable, because there were none. I mean none!

Kristin and Wendy cook out on the wind-swept shoreline of Georgian Bay on Lake Huron. The yellow Sea Ray was our first Great Lakes cruising vessel and is described as sleeping five uncomfortably. Now you see why.

CRUISING

Perhaps we should fast forward from that male gender semi-conquest and mention the beginnings of our boat cruising days. Our first real adventure with dams and locks was the Muskingum River in Ohio. This is a lovely cruise through the southern Ohio hill country. The river is navigable for small craft from Zanesville all the way to Marietta, on the Ohio River. There are a number of dams and locks and wonderful small towns and villages. It was this journey that whetted our appetite for bigger and better boats . . . and adventures.

Our next area was north to Lake Erie and the port of Sandusky, Ohio. Actually, the port was Cedar Point. What a great place to take kids, turn them loose in the park, and have them walk back to their accommodations. The accommodations were right next door in the Cedar Point Marina; these consisted of a 25-foot Sea Ray Cuddy Cabin cruiser; the Cuddy Cabin had three fold-down seats that made into relatively uncomfortable kid beds. The showers and bathrooms were provided by the

marina, which also provided the Marina Steak House, good for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Overnight dockage was $20. Cedar Point is also a great jumping-off point for the nearby islands, including South Bass and the town of Put-In-Bay. These are less interesting to kids than Cedar Point, but they were part of our first exposure to boating on the Great Lakes.

As we ventured out further with our 25-foot Sea Ray and its Cuddy Cabin and fold-down seats (sleeps five uncomfortably), we discovered the Canadian canal ways of southern Ontario. These included the Rideau Waterway, from Ottawa to Kingston, Ontario, and the Trent-Severn Waterway, from Trenton to Port Severn, Ontario. These two waterways were built by the British after the war of 1812 to enable them to bypass Lakes Ontario and Erie, which were controlled by the United States after our victory in the War of 1812. The British still controlled Canada and needed to have access by water to the fur trading posts on Lake Huron and Lake Superior. The British could come up the St. Lawrence River to Montreal and then turn right onto the Ottawa River. They then went up the Ottawa to the city of Ottawa. It was there that they built the Rideau to provide a waterway from the Ottawa River south to the Lake Ontario port of Kingston. Even though Lake Ontario was controlled by the Americans, the British believed they could run a short distance along the shoreline of Lake Ontario, across the Bay of Quinte, to the port town of Trenton. They then envisioned a waterway from Trenton, Ontario, completely bypassing the American-controlled Lake Erie and traveling northwest to Georgian Bay on Lake Erie. The exit port on Georgian Bay was and is Port Severn.

These waterways were built by the British, but it took so long to complete them that they were never used by commercial traffic to any great extent. Treaties were signed, deals were made, and . . . well, you know politicians. The result is that we have, to this day, two of the most beautiful and easily navigable waterways on the face of the earth.

Both the Trent-Severn Waterway and the Rideau Waterway traverse the heart of the Province of Ontario. Each waterway has in excess of forty dams and locks, and the locks are hand-operated by lockmasters employed by the Province of Ontario. The waterways' locks and dams connect numerous small lakes, rivers, and streams flowing through small towns and villages and often through the countryside of the province. They are user-friendly and make for an incredibly delightful experience. We have cruised both of them numerous times, beginning in our 25-foot Sea Ray and continuing right up to our mechanically-impaired 46-foot Carver.

The Trent-Severn, in particular, has some aspects that make it quite unique. At two different locks they have a cantilevered locking system. This is basically the equivalent of two very large bathtubs filled with water. Up-bound vessels float into the lock on the starboard side, and down-bound vessels float into the lock on the other side. The bathtub (lock) doors are then closed, and the counterbalanced pair of tubs exchange positions. The one on the right ascends as the one on the left descends. They are positioned perfectly with the water levels they have moved to, the doors open, and the boats float right out onto their next body of water.

Even more remarkable is the most famous landmark of the entire Trent-Severn waterway. It is known as Big Chute and enables vessels to detour around a set of rapids that drop over the glacial grooves, carrying water down the water route towards Georgian Bay. The total drop is over fifty feet. The means of conveyance is similar to an open-sided railroad freight car, with rail tracks built over the rocks; the route begins under the water of the upper lake and finishes under the water of the lower lake. You drive your boat onto the rail car and various hydraulic gizmos are adjusted to secure the boat in its upright position. Several boats of varying sizes are loaded for each transit. The car is then drawn by cable from the first lake up or down the hillside to the next lake, where it is unloaded. The

car is then loaded again in the same manner, and the same journey is done again in reverse. The trip takes about ten minutes, not quite long enough for any prop repair or repainting the bottom of the boat. Besides, all boaters are required to stay with their vessel. But what a feat of engineering, and what a fun way to ride your boat across the granite-and-pine-tree landscape of Northern Ontario.

Once you leave the Trent-Severn Waterway and head into Georgian Bay, you have to make an important decision. Are you going to travel inside or outside? This is similar to running up and down the east coast of the United States, traveling inside on the Intracoastal Waterway or running offshore in the Atlantic. If you are heading south from Port Severn, there is no way to go except into the open waters of Lake Huron. On the other hand, if you are traveling north through Georgian Bay, there is a wonderfully scenic and protected route that winds its way through the 10,000 islands of Georgian Bay. Before the waters dropped in the Great Lakes in the early 1990's, that route was available to vessels of all sizes, but some of the more shallow passages will now only accommodate boats with a four-foot draft or less. So if you don't have a big bottom (on your boat, that is), the small-vessel route is a great trip.

Well, not always. Once upon a time, way back in the times of the 25-foot Sea Ray, it was a cloudy and very windy day. Waves on the open waters of Georgian Bay were 2-4 feet, and Lake Huron was kicking up to 6 feet or better. Wendy, Ned, Scott, and Kristin were on the boat with me. Ned and Scott were teenagers, and Kristin was about 10. At any rate, we cleared the lock at Port Severn and headed north toward our next port of Killarney, pretty much a full day's cruise. Selecting the inside passage would give us protected cruising, except for about one minute in one open channel – Hang Dog Reef.

We had traveled this inner passage several times before, so I was familiar with Hang Dog. Even in rough water, it's just a matter of heading out into open water for a couple hundred yards, doing a U-Turn at marker buoy number 37, and heading back in on the other side of the reef. The channel is well marked with red and green buoys as you go out into open water with the granite rock reef on your starboard, turn around, and then come back in with the other set of channel markers, once again with the reef on your starboard. Simple enough? Of course.

We arrived at the point where it was time to turn into the first Hang Dog channel, only to see that the waves were breaking clear over the reef, making it impossible to see the reef itself. Furthermore, the waves were kicking up so high that they were starting to break over the boat. No problem. We zipped on the top cover for the boat, leaving three snaps undone on the front where Scott and I could stick our heads out to see the buoys and thus know when to turn. I needed Scott to watch with me because the spray was so thick that it covered my glasses and I couldn't see. Moreover, the spray was so heavy that the windshield wipers could not remove it fast enough from the windows.

The top now buttoned down, Wendy , Ned, and Kristin huddled together on the back seat. Scott and I were drenched from the neck up as we peered out over the windshield, our two heads about 3 inches apart. As we got near the outer end of the reef, it was imperative that we turn at the correct buoy. If we turned too soon, we would run onto the reef. If we went too far out, our boat was too small to turn in the heavy seas. Not a problem: Scott would just have to read the numbers on each buoy as we proceeded. By now, we had realized that with the boat bouncing, the buoys bouncing, the waves breaking clear over the boat, and the spray pretty much blinding us, reading buoy numbers was no small task.

After an eternity of about another minute, Scott saw what he believed to be a 7. He didn't know if there was a 3 with it or not. It looked to be about the right place to me. We came up alongside the

marker, threw the wheel hard to the right, and did a sharp 180 around the buoy. A large wave hit us broadside, tipping the boat precariously, and then there we were, heading back to sheltered water on what we believed to be the other side of Hang Dog Reef. Since we were now going with the waves and the wind, visibility was much improved. Nonetheless, we were very nervous about whether we were where we thought we should be. I knew that the outbound markers were odd-numbered and the inbound markers were even-numbered. Meanwhile, I was busy steering the boat up and over the peaks and through the troughs of the waves, while Scott was squinting for all he was worth to get a number. Finally he exclaimed, "Number 42!" About one minute later we made it to calmer water, at which point Scott turned his water-covered face toward me, his nose just inches from mine, and uttered his second most profound statement of the day. "Dad, I hope someday I can have kids so I can scare the shit out of them just like you!"

Wendy and Ned on the 25' Sea Ray, somewhere along the Canadian shoreline of Lake Huron. Note the two seats that folded down into beds.

TWO-FOOT-ITIS: BIGGER IS BETTER

There is a well-known disease among boaters. It is called "Two-Foot-itis." No boat is ever quite big enough. There is always a boat just a little bigger (two feet longer) that has everything we ever wanted. Once we have the longer boat, our satisfaction is destined to last anywhere from two to three years. Then we are once again overcome by that same terrible disease, Two-Foot-itis. Often, Two-Foot-itis becomes a misnomer. The increase desired seems to occur in increments of five and ten feet. In our case, our desires usually had a direct relationship to how many tacos we sold the previous year. Things such as planning, budgeting, or making do with what we have were simply not part of the equation. All considerations were summarized in one easy-to-remember phrase; "I don't needs it, I just wants it."

Now determining exactly what we need/want is the best part of boating. You get to go to boat dealers, boat conventions, and boat shows. You scour boat magazines as though they were the King

James version of boating. And, of course, once the new vessel is purchased, the outfitting further extends the general feeling of mission and euphoria, not necessarily in that order. After all, when does a family ever shop together for anything that has something in it for everyone? Wendy gets a flush toilet, then the next boat has hot water, and then a shower, and then (drum roll), a TUB! I get radar, then a GPS, then a Chart Plotter, and finally, the greatest luxury item of all, an Auto Pilot. (I mean, after all, the Captain is a busy fellow. We can't be bothered with steering the boat when we're mixing drinks or opening another package of Oreos.)

We moved up the boating ladder from our trusty old Sea Ray 25 to a 30-foot Sea Ray, and then to a 35-foot Carver. That was our first boat to end all boats. It had a real master cabin, a living area, and a galley big enough to feed the multitudes. What else could anyone ever want in a boat? We were so proud of it! One of our first trips was all the way to the east coast and Chesapeake Bay. We had always been told that the Chesapeake was boater's heaven, and indeed it was. We loved it so much that we decided to leave the boat there over the winter and come back to the Chesapeake the next summer. Our marina was entrusted with our baby; the staff swore their undying love for our little vessel, and we left, knowing it was in good hands for the winter. The engines were completely winterized, the top was snapped and zippered on tightly, and the boat was hauled from the water and placed upon the finest wooden cradle money could buy. Or so we thought.

We returned to Baltimore in late spring and went straight to the marina, where the boat had already been splashed, fueled, and made ready for our leisurely return to the Great Lakes. H-m-m . . . things seemed a little sticky around the helm area and in the engine compartment. I wondered if we should have shrink-wrapped it. The marina guy said that the Baltimore Harbor was well protected. To make a long story short: our lovely one-year-old Carver 35 had finished its first winter in salt water. It was not a pretty sight. Everything had to be pressure washed, detailed, hugged and kissed, until finally everything was in working order and our faded boat had regained some of its luster. Welcome to the world of salt water. It would be a long time before we ever again wintered in salt water.

A few years later we moved up to a Carver 42, gaining more room plus an aft deck. But the new boat had basically the same plumbing and electronics as on the 35. Our main complaint was that the upper deck was all canvas and zippers, so the nuisance value was high; all that snapping and zipping was just not a lot of fun. In addition, cruising in heavy weather was difficult because looking through the equivalent of a Saran Wrap window was a real challenge. Back to the boat shows.

That winter, Carver introduced their latest, greatest, and, at that time, their largest new cruiser. This was a 46-foot totally enclosed, totally air-conditioned vessel, with a king bed in the master suite; the guest stateroom even had a tub. TVs were everywhere, a large upright refrigerator/freezer was part of the galley, and twin Cummins 450's pushed it along comfortably at 20-22 knots. It drew 4'11" when loaded with fuel, and fuel capacity was 400 gallons. That should be enough fuel to take us to England! It was only later that I discovered that we got about six tenths of a mile to the gallon. Forget England; I'll just try to make it across Lake Michigan.

Well, we couldn't wait. We ordered one at the boat show, were thrilled with our $20 (more or less) discount, and couldn't wait for spring to arrive. We were to have the third 46-footer to come off the manufacturing line in Wisconsin. God was smiling. (As I look back on it, I think God was really just laughing . . . at us.)

Don't ever buy one of the first few manufactured items of anything new. NEVER! This boat had more bugs than an anthill. I had never had any major mechanical problems with any boat, even our previous Carver boats. This one made up for them all. I can't count the number of breakdowns we

had with this boat, and the number of times we limped into a harbor on one engine. I was on a first name basis with mechanics in Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Ontario, as well as those in Green Turtle, Kentucky; Aqua Yacht Basin, Mississippi; Crystal River, St. Petersburg, and North Palm Beach, Florida; Manasquan, New Jersey; and Baltimore, Maryland. I limped into so many ports on one engine, usually the port side, that my starboard engine hours meter registered nearly 40 fewer hours than the port side. That took a lot of explaining to the guy who bought the boat. Although I knew he was a rookie when he told me he was taking the boat back home to his 30-mile lake in Oklahoma and insisted he wanted the spare GPS and all the current programming for the chart plotter.

An all-too-familiar scene . . . .

Even so, this boat covered a lot of nautical miles and provided some of our guests with "out of this world" boating experiences. To venture out to sea on the *Taco Belle* (Carver called it a yacht, while others called it a piece of s---) was , shall we say, an adventure. Nonetheless, we had wondrous times with family and friends, and there's still a little part of me that yearns to go "down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky, / And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by." (Pardon my digression to the beginning of "Sea Fever" by John Masefield.) But travel by water does become a part of you. There is something about the water, be it fresh or salt, that is good for the soul. It brings with it the beauty of the open sea, the silhouette of the distant shore, the openness of the heavens, and the clarity of the stars; these can be seen best only from the water.

From the deck of our boat we have watched the changing of the guard by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Ottawa, Canada; heard the bagpiper's evening serenade from atop the lighthouse at Kincardine, Ontario; heard the cannon fire and taps bugled from Fort Mackinac on Mackinac Island; listened to the birds chirp and the trees grow while anchored in a small inlet on Georgian Bay; circled the Statue of Liberty at the entrance to the New York Harbor; and in many other times and places

filled our senses with sights and sounds that are somehow just a little more eloquent when seen or heard from the water.

The waterways of North America take you to places that are worthy of the books on our coffee tables. These include the quaint and pristine villages along the rivers and streams through the heart of the provinces of Quebec and Ontario, and similar scenes on the Erie Canal, Hudson River, and the Champlain waterway all the way to the St. Lawrence. Great cities are wonderful and exciting to see over the horizon or just around the next bend in the river. Our travels have included the skylines of New York, Chicago, Cleveland, Tampa, Savannah, Charleston, Baltimore, Washington, Toronto, and Montreal. We have also enjoyed entering the historic harbors of St. Augustine, Florida; Savannah, Georgia; Charleston, South Carolina; and, of course, our nation's capital. And even the smoke-filled air and trash-filled harbor waters of Pittsburgh, Mobile, Alabama, and any port in New Jersey remind us of the commercial and industrial centers that still make America a better place to live than wherever is in second place.

Our last cruising vessel, with the candy-striped lighthouse at Hope Town in the Abaco Islands of the Bahamas in the background. That's a long way from Georgian Bay, Ontario.

THE HAZARDS OF TRAVEL

The best part of boating is the opportunity to have shared the vast majority of those travels with family and friends. Certainly a handful of those trips were a little more memorable than others, and not necessarily because of the beauty of the countryside. Two experiences in particular come to mind. The first was the initial leg of the journey taking the boat from New Buffalo, Michigan, our home port on the Great Lakes, down to the west coast of Florida for the winter. The time of year was early fall, and we got an early start out of New Buffalo. We needed to cross Lake Michigan and enter the Calumet River, just south of downtown Chicago. The Calumet River ultimately becomes the Cal-Sag Channel, which I suspicion is part of the Chicago sewer system (just kidding). But it is really ugly, and so we invited Lee and Charley Garvin along for the ride (they're very forgiving people). Lee was part of our Taco Bell family and did all of our real estate and development for over twenty years. He served as one of our company's vice presidents, and this was his punishment.

Lee really had an additional role to fill on this particular run. Getting through this part of the Chicago harbor requires a lot of due diligence pertaining to noting channel markers and keeping out of the way of tug boats and ocean-sized vessels. Lee is an airplane pilot and so has some knowledge of charts and navigation. This knowledge was tested early on in the trip. We had left New Buffalo about three hours earlier, and so it was potty time for me. I gave Lee the chart book and the wheel, turned to the Chicago area chart page, and told him to just follow the channel markers. He only had to remember to keep the red markers to the right and the green ones to the left. I was gone less than two minutes. I got back to the helm, picked up the chart book, and asked, "Where are we?" Answer: "I don't know." I then did a visual and looked for the marker buoys. There weren't any. There were, however, a whole bunch of big cargo ships and barges and tugs . . . all around us. Now picture a very busy commercial working harbor with well-worn, well-used, poorly-painted, and rusty-looking LARGE vessels. The kind that use tractor tires for bumpers. Place into the middle of this picture a little 46-foot shiny white boat. It's like being in the wrong neighborhood in the wrong city at the wrong time of night. Only this was high noon and we were very visible. With no idea of our location, I turned around and slowly retreated by following the wake that we had left when entering wherever it was we were. We did have a number of spectators watch our exit, and I am confident there were a few snickers, a couple of guffaws, and probably some derisive remarks directed towards Lee. I know I had some for him!

In short order, we found the lost buoys and were merrily cruising through the Cal-Sag towards the Illinois River. Once on the Illinois, it's a rather Spartan cruise to the Mississippi, taking about three days with two overnights. Part of the reason for only two overnights is that marinas, those with both fuel and a restaurant, are few and far between. We did, however, have two reservations, so we were all set. Starved Rock Marina was our first stop. We got there in late afternoon, fueled up, and everything was fine. We had traveled about 120 miles and gone through four locks. The next day we were going from Starved Rock to a place called River's Edge Boat Club, at mile marker 97.5. That means we would be only 97½ miles from the Mississippi and have only one more lock to do the next day. Hooray!

I had never stopped at this marina before, but it was listed in Quimby's Guide as follows: "On channel, depth at gas dock 6' at normal pool; Gas-Diesel-Restaurant-Lounge; Open year-round; Monitors channel 16." Great! They had everything we needed: diesel fuel, water depth, and a restaurant. By late afternoon, we had cleared our last lock, and our charts put us at about mile 98. The marina

should have been just around the bend. We went around the bend, but I didn't see a marina. We went about a quarter mile further, and I saw on the right bank a small barge with a couple of 1000-gallon fuel tanks on the barge. There was also another smaller boat tied up to a tree on the mud bank. I saw nothing else, and they hadn't answered any of the radio calls we'd been making for the past fifteen minutes. In we went. There was not room for us at the fuel dock, so the other boater pulled forward a little so we could squeeze in behind and beside him. He didn't want to pull very far forward, because they were using a large drag-type shovel to do a little dredging.

With that, the dock master appeared. I use the term dock master quite loosely. First, there was no dock. Secondly, this guy was master of nothing. He walked toward the fuel barge, following a narrow footpath in the mud along the hillside from about thirty feet above the barge. A mountain goat would be at risk on this trail. On the other hand, if this guy somehow tripped or slipped in the mud, he would not get any more dirty. More importantly, I was confident he would not spill a drop of his Miller High Life during his descent. I could see that he was clearly well-practiced on this path, having already disposed of about a hundred Miller cans along the way from previous such hikes. It was not a long journey from the restaurant building to the barge, about 30 yards or so, but I'm confident the Miller cans served him well as channel markers.

He arrived and asked if we wanted some fuel before we tied up. I answered, "Yes," and then, looking around for the marina, asked where he wanted us to tie up after fueling. The answer was classic: "We ain't done dredging it out yet." With that, Billy Bob came out of the restaurant, got into the seat of this huge dragline bucket, and proceeded to dump it into the water, dragging the dirt up the hillside. He then raised the bucket into the air, dripping gallons of muddy water as he transferred it to the opposite bank. This traversing action rotated the muddy-water-dripping bucket right over the bow of the other boat. That guy had a poop hemorrhage. Mr. Dockmaster says words along the lines of not to worry, we'll "spray ya down when we git dun." Trust me. You can't make this stuff up. If you doubt me, ask Wendy. Anyway, it gets better! "You boys still want fuel?" "Yep," I said, trying to join in the spirit of the moment. "Well, let me git the pump a-goin' and we'll gitcha sum gas." "Remember," I said, "We use diesel."

With that he put his beer down and turned on the pump switch. Nothing happened. He then picked up the barge end of a long orange extension cord that covered the distance from the restaurant building, down the hillside, across and UNDER the water, and onto the barge. Remember the words, under the water. Dockmaster then began pulling the extension cord toward the barge through the water, mumbling something about he probably had a bad connection. Garvin and I looked for the connection but didn't see one anywhere along the hillside where two cords were plugged together. At that point, Dockmaster pulled another few feet of orange cord up onto the barge. Sure enough, there was the connection of two separate cords, having been under water the whole time, with nothing waterproofing them in any fashion whatsoever. Well, he grabbed the two cords, Garvin backed away, Dockman gave a little yelp and said something like, "That was a hot one, " to which Garvin responded by asking him if he glows very often. True! Dockmaster didn't get it. He put the cords, connected, down onto the steel surface of the barge and said he'd have to walk back up to the restaurant and check the power source up there. Garvin immediately retreated from the steel floor of the barge and back onto the fiberglass boat.

At this juncture, Lee remarked that, based upon everything else around here, maybe we might want to get concerned about what quality of fuel we might be buying. He then quickly went back to the fuel tank and thumped the side, only to discover that there was very little left in the tank, all in the bottom with likely a lot of rust, dirt, assorted particles, and water mixed in. I had enough to get to

Alton, Illinois, on the Mississippi, so we voted for no fuel. Meanwhile, Mr. Dockmaster was returning, beer can in hand, but with no luck in fixing the problem.

One of the gals then asked the Dockmaster what time the restaurant opened for dinner. "Oh, we been shut down since last year. We can load you-all up in the pickup and take 'ya to town." The gals look at the steep muddy hill, the narrow goat path, and all of a sudden, we have enough food for dinner on the boat. Macaroni and cheese were never so good.

It is important to know that we had little communication problem with these fellows. You see, Lee is from North Carolina, and so there was great commonality of language, dialect, and accent. Especially accent. If he said "Thanks y'all" once, he said it a thousand times. Naturally, he believes he kept them away from raping the women and pillaging the boat that night, just because he was a "friendly feller."

Is there anything equal to our experience with Mr. Dockmaster and Billy Bob from River's Edge Boat Club? Well, let me tell you a story about Lady's Landing, and then you be the judge. Lady's Landing is 79 miles north of Mobile Bay, in the heart of southern Alabama. It is part of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway, which connects the Tennessee River to the Gulf of Mexico. The portion where you will find Lady's Landing is actually a portion of the Tombigbee River, and this is in serious backwoods country. Right out of Deliverance.

Our guests (victims) this time were Al and Sue Maurice from Urbana, Ohio. Al is an attorney, so you would expect some degree of sophistication. Not so. Otherwise, he wouldn't be hanging out with me. Sue and Wendy get along well because they both giggle a lot. Lady's Landing was a stop on the trip from Kentucky Lake to Florida. It definitely generated a lot of giggles.

Lady's Landing is the only marina between Demopolis, Alabama and the Gulf, a distance of 230 miles. It had deep water and diesel fuel, and by special order they would fix you a steak dinner, with all the "trimmins," for $35 each. Since they were the only game around, we ordered dinner and waited to see what we would get. We approached their floating dock late in the afternoon and were greeted by, if you would believe it, another Billy Bob. He caught the lines thrown from the boat, tied us up professionally, and was generally helpful. Good show. We were the only boat tied to this nearly 200-foot dock that paralleled the shoreline. There was a short twelve- to fifteen-foot ramp from the dock to the shore. The bank was a gentle slope of about thirty feet from the waterline to the top. It was all mud. We could see from the boat that it was deep mud. How could we tell? Because their Great Dane dog was sinking in to his knee joint. And the goat wouldn't get in the mud at all. And their other wolf-like dog would only play around the edges.

So we were all standing and talking together on the dock, and Billy Bob said, "Would you ladies like to come up and see our gift shop?" Hem and haw . . . throat clearing, etc. So Sue asked , "Well, how do we get there through all the mud?" Billy Bob answered, "Well, Missy, I'll jist carry you." With that, he grabbed Sue around the waist from behind, picked her up, and carried her across the ramp, onto and through the length of a 12-foot flat-bottomed fishing boat, then stepped onto a 12-foot plank for the last leg through the shallowest of the mud at the top. Now Billy Bob was a big strong boy, but that was an impressive performance. And guess what: he had one more to go. Wendy was not exactly standing there waving and saying, "Pick me, pick me." She knew she was next. Articulate though she is, there was no way to talk her way out of this one. Billy Bob was already on the return trip. Meanwhile, Sue was at the top of the hill, still with a look of amazement on her face, and a silly grin because now she would get to watch Wendy. By this time, Al and I had figured it was time to do the ramp-mud-boat-mud-plank-mud hike to the top. We were off. Shortly after, Billy Bob arrived with Wendy, and cheers were shared by all.

The gals decided the gift shop was pretty tacky, but Al and I were a little intimidated and thought we should buy something. We each bought a couple of Lady's Landing white hats, and I still have mine and cherish the memory. My greatest regret is that neither Al nor I had the presence of mind to get a video of the gals going up the hill.

Ah, but there's more. Remember the wolf-like dog we mentioned? Someone asked Billy Bob what kind of breed the black dog was. Billy replied, "Oh, he's a wolf." "Is he crossed with anything?" "No ma'am, he's just a wolf." "Well, is he tame?" "Sometimes." "How did you tame him?" "I just beat him with my rubber hose." We cut the wolf a wide path the rest of the day.

We were fueled, it was late afternoon, and cocktail hour was in progress when Billy came down to the boat to ask how we wanted our steaks done. We asked him where the dining room was and what time did they want us. Billy told us that there is no dining room and that they will deliver dinner to the boat. Cool. I thought that for $35 for a tough steak with trimmings, the least they could do is deliver it. So there.

About an hour later, here came the parade. It took four people to carry dinner for just four people. Maybe they were going to sit down and join us. Nope, it was all just for the four of us. The steaks were the biggest I'd ever seen. One of them could have fed all four of us. The baked potatoes were about the size of grapefruit. The bowl of green beans was enough for a dozen helpings. The salad was similarly enormous. And they apologized that they didn't have time to bake us our pie that day, so they brought us some fresh baked brownies – the whole pan! We ate leftovers the rest of the trip.

RED, WHITE, AND BLUE RESCUE

And then there was the time we crossed the Gulf of Mexico. The Intracoastal Waterway does not run all the way from the Florida Panhandle to the west coast of Florida. It is necessary to depart from Apalachicola, Florida, and cruise in a generally southeasterly direction toward the Anclote Keys near New Port Richey. However, Wendy and I decided that since we had no guests on board for this leg of the trip, we would short-circuit the trip and head towards Crystal River, Florida. Crystal River is one of the towns where we owned a Taco Bell restaurant, so I knew the community well and a little about the harbor. I also knew that the lengthy, twisting, and shallow entrance channel to the harbor was not something I wanted to tackle alone. It was not detailed on the charts or my Chart Plotter. So our friend from Crystal River, Charlie Slider, who has fished and dived those waters for years, was on radio standby to come out and guide us in when we reached the outer marker.

Crystal River was a shorter destination than the Anclote Keys by about 30 miles, so we figured a journey of about 130 miles or about 6½ hours. Seas were small, about 1-2', and the wind was quartering across the port bow. We got an early start from Apalachicola and cleared the outer bank in about fifteen minutes. Once we set our heading for Crystal River, we looked around and noticed that the skies were cloudless and the waters boatless. We did leave the docks at the same time as a smaller boat, but he was ahead of us and already out of sight. The ocean was building slightly during the morning hours to about two- to three-foot roller-type waves. The deep–V hull on our 46' Carver handled them well. I regularly checked my instruments; everything was working well, and the auto-pilot was holding a true course. It was not wandering much at all, considering the quartering wind.

It was getting close to lunch time. I wandered downstairs to check with Wendy about maybe a sandwich and some chips. When I returned to the helm, I noticed that my starboard engine was running a little hot. Over the next few minutes, it steadily climbed to the top of the scale. I shut it down and put the port engine on idle. Ironically, we were exactly at the point of no return, 65 miles. I went down below to the engine compartment and immediately noticed that there was water beneath the starboard engine. So what was that all about? I didn't see it dripping anywhere from the engine, but clearly the engine was overheating because the cooling water was not reaching it. Next question: why were the bilges not keeping the bilge free of the water? Were they not working? Did I have some kind of a leak that was so big that the bilge pumps couldn't keep up? Being the non-mechanic that I am, I needed to place a call. But I was 65 miles away from the nearest shoreline. Would anybody hear me? Maybe I should at least keep moving with the port engine, getting closer to shore with each mile (I hoped).

We got under way again, going on one engine at about eight or nine knots and hand steering because the auto pilot could not hold a true course in the quartering seas. I put out a May Day on my radio; each time I transmitted, I got a crackling sound on my radio, but no return message. My assumption was that I was being heard, but my receiver was not strong enough to get the return message.

Wendy then came up with the idea of trying our cell phones. I couldn't imagine being sixty miles away from the nearest possible tower and getting any communication. But anything was worth a try. I dialed up Charlie Slider, and lo and behold, he answered his phone. He jumped all over our problem, calling the nearest Coast Guard Station to give them our coordinates and dilemma, just in case either of us lost signal. He also asked them to call me direct on my cell phone. They did so promptly and I

gave them my story. They seemed pretty matter-of-fact until I mentioned that I was taking on water. Now it was serious stuff. They asked me a bunch of questions: "Do you have your life jackets on?" "Do you have a dinghy?" "Launch it now." "How much water is in your bilge and how fast is it rising?" I told them about two to three inches, and that the level only increased when I was underway. "Okay, Mr. Kirby," they say. "We will be transferring you to our Clearwater-St. Pete Air Rescue Station. They will be calling you momentarily." That certainly relieved some of the anxiety. Shortly I heard from St. Pete. They were on their way with a chopper and would be there in about thirty minutes.

After about twenty-five minutes of drifting so as not to be a moving target for them, I got a message on the radio. It was the Coast Guard chopper pilot and his message was simple and direct. "We have you in sight." I answered, "That's the best five words I've heard in a long time." Their mission was to drop off a portable pump on our front deck for us to use while we went the rest of the way to Crystal River on one engine. After several passes and misses, caused by the wind and the rolling boat, they decided to put the pump in a special flotation device and lower it into the water from the chopper with a frogman to swim it over to our stern platform. This was like right out of the movies. The pump hit the water about 40 feet away from the boat. The frogman was lowered down by a cable, right next to the pump. He swam it over and he and I lifted it onto the swim platform. We struggled, but we got it there. I asked him how heavy it was. He said about 120 pounds. I wondered how in the world they expected me to get it from my front deck, through a very narrow door, into the boat, down the steps, through another door, down more steps, through the lounge, down more steps to the front stateroom, and then down three more steps into the engine compartment. And then I was supposed to figure out how to work it. Lots of luck!

I was really glad Mr. Frogman was there to help. So was Wendy. She thought he was really cute. Big deal! He was also in a hurry because his chopper had a limited fuel supply. So now we had a three-person team to operate this commercial-sized pump normally used on ocean liners and freighters. It pumped something like a bejillion gallons per minute through its fire-truck-sized hose. The frogman could not find the source of the leak either, but he proceeded to educate me on pump operation. Okay, we were all ready. He had the short hose held under the engine to suck up the water. I was in charge of the pump, and Wendy was in charge of keeping the other end of the fire hose aimed out through the main salon window.

The command was given: "Let 'er rip!" (Or some other nautical sounding phrase.) At any rate, I got the pump going, he had his end in the water, and whoosh – no – – BIG whoosh! There was a torrent of a hose full of water traveling upstairs towards Wendy at mach two speed. God, I hoped she was ready. I jumped over to the stairs to see if she was okay, just as the water reached her end. Well, you've never seen such a fight between a fire hose and one woman in your life. That hose threw her every which way but down, and to my amazement and admiration, not a drop of salt water found its way onto her carpet. She did it! It pumped us dry in less than a minute.

It was time for Frogman to go. He leapt onto his white charger, and with a jaunty wave and a "Hi-Yo, Silver," he was back in the water and riding his cable back up to the chopper. Meanwhile, back on the boat, Wendy was standing on the back deck with her tongue hanging out, still waving good-bye to Mr. Frogman.

We were to repeat this pumping process about every hour or so, as needed. It was now mid-afternoon, and we had about eight to ten hours of hanging onto a wheel that continually wanted to turn to starboard. Not much fun. In fact, the push on the wheel was so great that we had to stop the boat when we pumped out, because Wendy was not strong enough to hold the wheel on course.

One of the interesting sidelights of the nine hours to Crystal River was that we were escorted by a few dolphins nearly the entire way. I was told later by the natives that dolphins seem to sense boats and people in distress and accompany them to protect them from sharks. At any rate, they were fun to watch.

We reached the Crystal River outer marker at just about midnight, and good ole Charlie was waiting there for us in his fishing boat. We followed him through the twisting channel to our assigned boat slip. Voyage completed, thanks to my only first-hand experience with the United States Coast Guard. I thought about that a lot after the episode, and about how fortunate we were to be off an American coastline, and how impressive the response was from both Yankeetown and Clearwater Stations. And how special were those five little words, "We have you in sight," and the almost audible sigh of relief when we were once again under weigh.

A footnote to the story is that I got back home and sent a letter to the station commander at St. Pete, expressing our gratitude and saying what fine young people were under his command, and how proud we were to be Americans, etc. I also enclosed a couple hundred Taco Bell coupons. I received a phone call back from the Commander a few weeks later. He enjoyed the letter and was effusive in his thanks for the coupons. He told me that over half of the enlisted people in his command were on food stamps.

He then shared with me the fact that the 500 people under his command at that station seldom get to see, meet, or talk with anyone they rescue. He asked if Wendy and I would be willing to come back some time to the station and talk with his people. We said, "Certainly," and traveled back to Florida and Clearwater a couple of months later.

We were met at the gate by the C.O.'s executive officer. He drove us in an open military jeep to the commandant's office, where we met the C.O. and were treated royally. We then received a personally guided tour of the base, including the Top Secret Drug Interdiction Coordination Center for the entire Caribbean. At the appointed hour, we were driven over to a large hangar that had been emptied of all aircraft and cleaned up with spit and polish, apparently for some visiting royalty. Oops, that would be us. We realized that this was really a big deal to them, as we continued to receive red-carpet treatment. We were re-introduced to our frogman (Wendy salivated) and got to meet our chopper pilot. As we were standing there chit-chatting, people seemed to be coming from everywhere. They nearly filled the hangar. The C.O shut down the base for a half hour, except for M.P's, just to listen to a couple of old people tell them how special they were, what a great job they do, how much aid and comfort they provided us, and how proud we were to be Americans. We answered several questions and had great fun. The several hundred assembled service men and women seemed to particularly enjoy it when I jabbed the pilot about not being able to hit my front deck with his little old pump. They also enjoyed Wendy's embarrassment when I thanked them for sending a stud-muffin to rescue my wife.

It was a wonderful time and a special time. It was also representative of our many years of boating. It was, and is, all about sharing good times, unique experiences, wondrous places, and all with dear family and good friends.

Part of the Air-Sea Rescue contingent who came to our aid in the Gulf of Mexico. The frogman (front row in the jumpsuit) who was lowered down to us from a helicopter was the first one Wendy fell in love with. In the center of the picture (in the flight jacket) is the pilot who flew to our rescue from the Clearwater-St. Pete Coast Guard station. We first met him on this visit to the station, and yep, Wendy fell in love again.

GETTING LOOPED

I'll bet you think this is about booze and other such nefarious topics. WRONG! This is about the Great Loop. So you don't know about this either? Well, neither did my wonderful editor of this book. Linda is more of the highly-educated literary type. They prefer that the action come to them. [Ed. note: She also loves maps.] I tried to describe to her the GREAT LOOP, where the real action is for boaters, at least in the eastern half of the USA. Her answer was, "Give me a one-paragraph description . . . and a map."

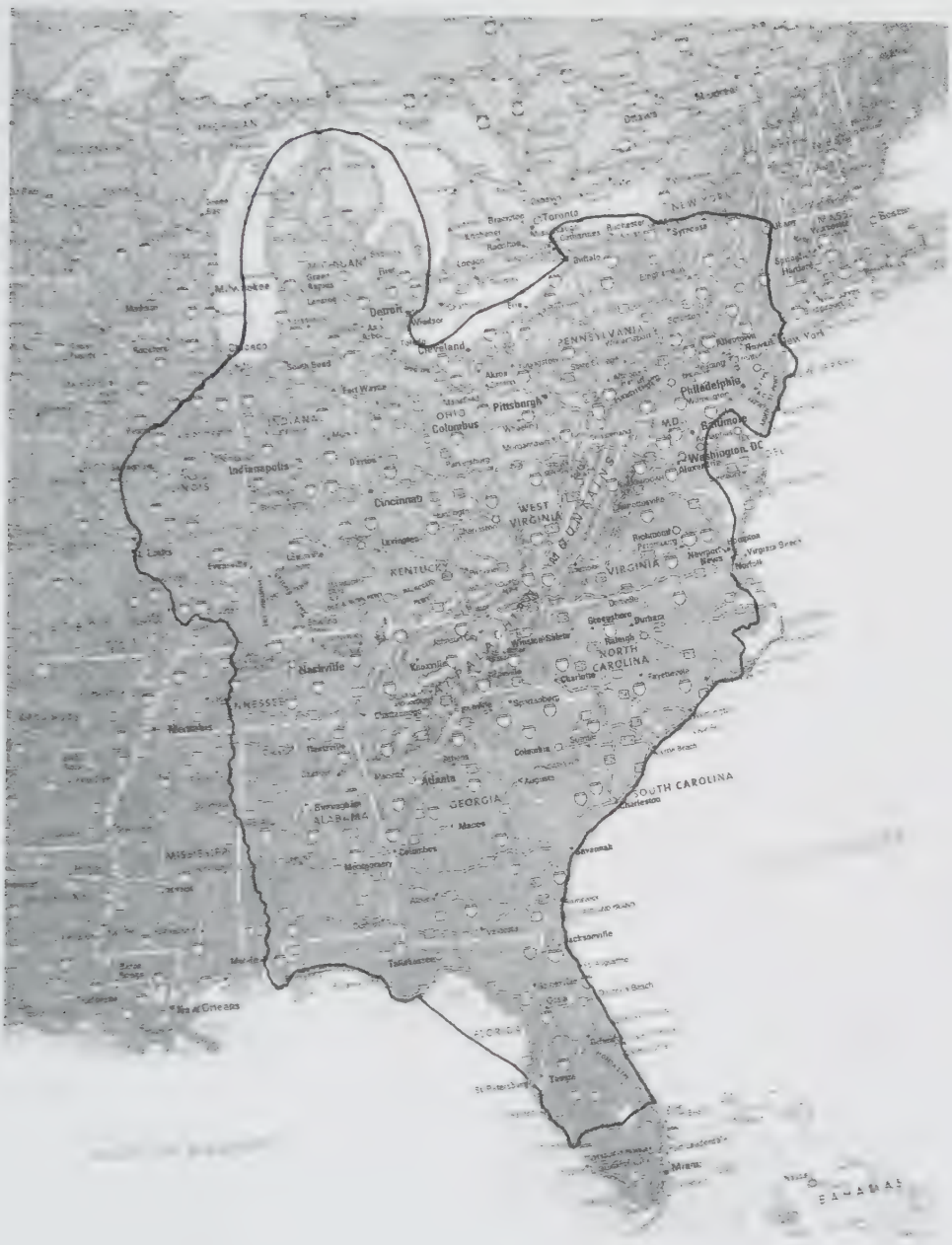
Her curiosity was aroused by the fact that most of our boating adventures, at least those mentioned in this book, have occurred while traveling the Great Loop. The Great Loop is a combination of lakes, rivers, and streams, plus the Intracoastal Waterway along the Atlantic coast and the Gulf of Mexico. They are all connected together, sometimes by man-made canals and locks, and provide a continuous water route, in the general shape of a loop, between the Great Lakes and Florida. (Linda, this cannot be done in one paragraph. I'm already up to two, and haven't even started. I'm sure she will say to just continue and do my best.) [Ed. note: Keep going, Ned.]

Departing from the Great Lakes to the east means to leave Lake Ontario through its southern shore at the town of Oswego, New York. Oswego is the northern terminus of the Oswego Cut-off, a north/south arm of the famed Erie Canal. The main Erie Canal runs east and west from Buffalo on Lake Erie to Troy, New York, on the Hudson River. However, the western half of the Erie has several low, non-moving bridges, causing vessels needing more than fifteen feet of headroom to use the Oswego cutoff. Once the Hudson River is reached, you can turn south and go all the way to New York City. Wave at the Statue of Liberty and then head out into the ocean, weather permitting, and make the short run down to Manasquan, New Jersey. It is at that point that the Intracoastal turns back for an inside cruise, safe from the high seas of the ocean. However, if the weather is good, stay outside at least as far as Atlantic City because the inland route is highly treacherous and poorly marked with navigational markers. (Actually, it sucks.)

Keep heading south to the southern tip of New Jersey, where you will turn around Cape May and head northwest up into Delaware Bay. Where Delaware Bay starts to be narrow enough to become the Delaware River . . . it does. Also at that point, the C and D canal enters the bay from the south. Turn into the canal and it will take you southerly to the far northern tip of Chesapeake Bay. The sheltered waters of Chesapeake Bay will take you as far south as the Naval Yards at Norfolk, Virginia. Shortly thereafter, you will enter the Great Dismal Swamp. It is appropriately named. Virginia has more scenic areas, but the canal through the swamp only lasts about twenty miles. Then, all of a sudden you find yourself in the Albemarle Sound of North Carolina. The ICW continues its winding course inside the outer banks of North Carolina. This routing continues through South Carolina to the north Georgia border. Obviously, fuel stops are a requirement at Charleston, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia. I mean fuel stops for the soul. The ICW continues south along the outer banks and inland shoreline waterways, through Georgia and Florida. When you reach Stuart, Florida, turn right into the St. Lucie canal, which will take you to and through Lake Okeechobee. You will exit Okeechobee near the village of Clewiston and follow the canal north until you turn left, heading into the Caloosahatchee River, which will take you all the way to Fort Myers. It is at that point in time that you tie up the boat for the winter and live on it, or freeload on all of your rich friends with condos on the west coast.

Now, if you're either real brave or real stupid, you may vicariously ride along with me as we travel through the deep south and Midwest of this great country, returning back to the Great Lakes with our terminus being Chicago. We start along the west coast of Florida having islands and keys as our protection as far north as the Anclote Keys. At that point, we have open water for approximately 160 miles, traveling northwest towards the Florida Panhandle with Apalachicola being our port of destination. From that point on there is no more open water as we cruise west through the panhandle to Mobile Bay. Turn north through the bay and start our tour of the back woods , rivers and streams of the deep south. We begin at the north end of Mobile Bay, where we enter the Tombigbee River. This takes us straight north through western Alabama, crossing into Mississippi just west of Tuscaloosa. We take the Tombigbee through the state of Mississippi, where we enter the Tenn-Tom Waterway just east of Tupelo. This man-made canal runs north and south for about thirty miles and joins into the Tennessee River in the very northeast corner of Mississippi.

The rest is a slam dunk. We take the Tennessee River nearly straight north, through Tennessee and Kentucky, where it flows into the Ohio River, just north of Paducah. Down the Ohio we go, to the Mississippi, where we hang a right, once again heading north on the mighty Mississippi, to just north of St. Louis. We pass Alton, Illinois, hopefully on our right, and then enter the Illinois River, leading us northeast through the state of Illinois. As we approach Chicago, we intend to enter Lake Michigan to the south of the city in order to avoid river congestion and dozens of bridges. This takes us on some delightful little waterways such as the Des Plaines River, known for its carp fishing, into the Chicago Sanitary Canal, known for its . . . never mind, into the Cal-Sag Waterway, which becomes the Calumet River as it enters Lake Michigan. Another thirty-two miles northeast takes us to our home port of New Buffalo, Michigan. That's a pot full of boat driving. I'm exhausted. Will somebody please get a beer and some Oreos for the captain?



The Great Loop, hand drawn by Edwin S. Kirby, July, 2010.

DHIMITRI AND KATERINA

This is a story that should begin "Once Upon a Time." It is a story that is as good as any fairy tale, with one big distinction. It is true. It is a story of success and failure, happiness and sadness, inspiration, perspiration, and just good old-fashioned values and hard work. And yes, it could only happen in America.

Dhimitri and Katerina were an elderly couple from Albania. They were both in their sixties when they arrived in America. They had left behind their children and their grandchildren in Albania. Why would they ever do such a thing, particularly at their age? The answer is quite simple; they won the green card lottery!

Through the Department of State of the government of the United States of America, there are periodic drawings held in certain select foreign nations. These drawings provide one of life's greatest opportunities, particularly in foreign lands where liberty and freedom are often nothing more than words. And even then, such words are often not spoken loudly and never outside the closely knit circle of friends and family. The Balkan states, including Albania, have seen decades of war and civil unrest, usually under a government run by a dictator and enforced by the local militia. Such is the way it was in Albania at the turn of the twenty-first century.

With the help of the United Nations, troops from many of the NATO countries, and the usual leadership role played by America, Albania gained its freedom, and with it, support from many countries throughout the free world. One of America's means of aiding citizens of oppressed countries is the chance to receive a green card, good for entry to the land of the free and the home of the brave. In Albania, it was done lottery style, and that is how Dhimitri and Katerina came to America.

Arrangements were made for them to come to Lafayette, Indiana, where there resides a small Albanian enclave, already established and fluent in both languages. Because Dhimitri and Katerina knew absolutely NO English, it looked like a good fit. They arrived in a few months with the clothes on their backs and a couple of cloth-type duffels packed with the remainder of their worldly goods. They arrived nervous, afraid, intimidated, and already homesick. Had they been able to transfer their green cards to either of their children, they would have done so. That was not possible. Sort of like playing the hand you are dealt. And play it they did. They arrived with a game plan. They would work hard, save every penny possible, and send money over to their children, enough to bring both families to America.

Lest there be any doubt, it should be known that the Albanians already here were well prepared for their arrival and took care of many of the details necessary for the smooth introduction of newly-arrived immigrants. They had rented them a place to live – a government-subsidized converted one-story motel room, plus bath and a tiny kitchenette. Just the bare essentials, in a very compact three hundred square feet. They also had arranged for transportation: two used bicycles. Most importantly, they had arranged for employment for them both at the same place, on the same shift: our Taco Bell restaurant on Route 52 in West Lafayette, Indiana.

As the employer, we were not exactly certain what we were getting into, but we had enough Latinos on our payroll to know how to deal with most language barriers. Besides, a couple of the bilingual Albanians assured us they would help out during orientation and the first couple of days on the job.

So on a bright and sunshiny day, Dhimitri and Katerina showed up promptly at 8:00 a.m. in their Taco Bell uniforms, ready for whatever the New World would give them. Our restaurant manager at that location at the time was Jaymie Hodges, and this was just her kind of project. She is a "can do" kind of kid, and she was able to meet most any challenge, simply by the strength of her will and a lot of bull-headedness.

Well, we quickly discovered that whatever they spoke in Albania was not even remotely like Spanish, or anything else we had ever heard. No problem for Jaymie. She would tell them how to do something repeatedly, until they got it. And if that didn't work, she would say it louder . . . and louder. And Jaymie can get really loud. Sometimes her mouth is almost as big as her heart, and between the two, somehow, it worked.

Certainly this was a little like a make-work project, sort of our contribution to society in Lafayette. Dhimitri was given the opening morning chores of sweeping, cleaning and spraying everything that he could see, taking out trash, and so forth. Katerina was placed in the kitchen and learned how to prep every kind of foodstuff on the menu and clean up afterwards. Remember, these people were in their 60's, in a business staffed by people 40 years younger, a business that moves very quickly.

Well, they did it . . . with enthusiasm, high energy, and always a smile. They were just so happy to be here, to be cared for by Jaymie and our company, and to be parental role models for all of the young people who worked with them and loved them in this restaurant. It was an adoption, pure and simple. Every time I would return to that restaurant, generally on a weekly basis, Dhimitri would usually spot me first. I could barely get through the doorway before I was embraced in the greatest of Albanian bear hugs, heard every English word he knew, and was repeatedly thanked in every way possible for his job. Of course, I always had to also check out the kitchen area on my visits, and again, it was a repeat bear hug, this time from a very large and old woman who spoke even less English than her husband. But the thank-you's were no less sincere . . . and the bear hugs were rib-cracking.

Dhimitri and Katerina were on a mission. They had a definite game plan. They were going to save every penny they could and bring their entire family to America: both their children, their children's spouses, and their four grandchildren. We all know that the fast-food business is not noted for high rates of pay, so I told Jaymie that in a year, we'd check and see how much, if anything, they had saved. We would help them out a little; maybe do one family of four and then the other. Dhimitri and Katerina, on the other hand, were focused on maximizing their hours to save their money more quickly. They just knew they could save $10,000 in a year, enough to bring everybody over.

Approximately one year later, I checked with Jaymie and asked her to find out how much, if anything, they had saved. I was stunned. They had stashed away slightly over $9,000! They were ready to rock and roll. They had been paying a very modest rent, had no transportation cost, ate two meals a day at the restaurant – and the rest is history. Nonetheless, it proves that miracles do happen.

It was now time to deal with the U.S. bureaucracy and begin the paperwork for the rest of the family. In short order, Dhimitri and Katerina discovered that their game plan would require several alterations. Their children and their families would have to make application and wait the prescribed number of years to gain entry to the United States. This was in spite of the fact that both of their children were college graduates in Albania, their son being a military officer and their daughter a grade-school teacher. Both spoke English. Nevertheless, the reunification of this family, even with highly-educated green card applicants, did not make any difference to our State Department. Rules are rules.

During the period of time that we were processing applications and learning the legal ropes, Katerina became quite ill. Her illness progressed until she was terminally ill with a variety of cancers. She wanted to be with her children and grandchildren and to die in her homeland of Albania. We helped them out financially, and sadly, Dhimitri and Katerina returned home, where she spent her final months surrounded by her family and other friends. But that is not the end of the story.

Dhimitri was still on his mission. He learned that Canada had no such restrictions for the remainder of his family, and so the original game plan was modified. Dhimitri returned to America on his existing green card and moved to Detroit. His two children, their spouses, and his four grandchildren moved to Windsor, Ontario, just across the river from Detroit. Travel back and forth between Detroit and Windsor had no restrictions for Dhimitri, and so he could and did visit them frequently. The five-year wait for green cards for the rest of the family is now long past. They are now all together in Detroit, enjoying the blessings of being part of a free society, and knowing that their beloved Katerina is there in spirit, watching over them. This was all fueled through a couple of minimum-wage jobs, in a little Taco Bell restaurant in Lafayette, Indiana. Dhimitri and Katerina had a dream and lived it to fruition. They touched many of our lives in the process, but I hope that they especially touched the lives of those many young people who worked side-by-side with them, for they too have dreams and the same opportunities for fulfillment. If we were able to capture the minds and hearts of just a few of them . . . just a couple . . . we would know that the American Dream is alive and well.

It was at Christmas time during Dhimitri and Katerina's first year in America. Wendy and I received a Christmas card from them, written in Dhimitri's own handwriting, although certainly with some help on words and punctuation. While the words may not be exactly of Dhimitri's choice, I am confident they tell us what was in his mind and heart. It reads as follows:

> Dear Ned and Wendy;
>
> It was God's wish and our faith to Him that made us to come to America. God made it possible for us to work at Taco Bell and we wish that our children also work at Taco Bell when they come here.
>
> My wife, Katerina, and I are glad to be here today. From the day we came here we have felt the hospitality of American people. People in Albania talk very much about this hospitality, but it is much more different for us that have felt it.
>
> We have felt it from people who we work with, our neighbors, even from the leaders of Taco Bell. We believe that God brought us here, among people who take care of us, and we feel secure.
>
> We will never forget the good words the people said to us: "Don't worry, we are here to help you;" and really they have helped us very much.
>
> We have tried to reply to this hospitality with our work, but we don't know how well we have done that. We are still going to try with the best we can to do our work better so everyone will feel better.
>
> Thank you for everything!
> God bless you!
> Merry Christmas!
> Dhimitri and Katerina

Dhimitri Gjino

CATHIE MATHEWSON

Cathie was unique in our company in that she represented so many of the problems associated with our restaurant managers over the years. Most of our managers usually had two or three of her problems, but Cathie seemed to have ALL of them, ALL of the time. When God was handing out green cards, Cathie got stuck behind the entrance door. She then probably tried to enter through the exit door, only to be swept aside by everyone else, all exiting in a hurry to get on with their lives. Cathie just never seemed to be able to get it put all together. But oh, how she tried, and tried, and tried.

We inherited Cathie as part of the management team when we purchased our first restaurant in Florida. It was restaurant number 594 in the Taco Bell corporate roster and was located in Gainesville, Florida. Its acquisition was suggested to us as a business expansion opportunity by TBC, and even though it was a thousand miles away, it appeared to provide a base for new store development in a part of Florida as yet not touched by the Taco Bell system. Gainesville alone would have made the venture worthwhile. Over the next few years, we developed an additional five more restaurants in this college town of 125,000 people. Our individual store sales average in Gainesville was one of the highest markets nationally, and the store on Archer Road in Gainesville was one of the first $2 million dollar stores in the entire system. Ultimately, we developed a network of fifteen restaurants in the north central area of Florida, incorporating the metro areas of Gainesville and Ocala and going coast to coast from Citrus County in the west to St. Augustine and Palm Coast on the east coast.

One of the interesting aspects of personnel management in Florida compared to Indiana was that Florida people were a little more laid back. Their pace was a little slower, but they also had more fun doing their jobs. They also had some of the darnedest life stories to tell, and as nearly as I could figure, they were all true. Cathie's was one of those stories.

As the assistant manager of our one Gainesville store, she was promoted to restaurant manager when we moved her store manager into another new unit on the other side of the University of Florida campus. We knew it would be a challenge for Cathie, but we believed that strong supervisory support would help her overcome the bumps in the road. It did work well. Cathie never claimed to be a rocket scientist, but she overcame the rough edges with an above-average work ethic (for Florida) and a commitment to give it her best to please the company, in gratitude for this management opportunity.

She did all of this while carrying a lot of personal baggage. She was an unmarried mother, raising her family with no help from the father of her children. She was also living with an abusive man, who also contributed nothing monetarily towards the costs of housing, transportation, food, and so forth. She had no other family, no one to lean upon or to confide in, except for her business family. She really was a middle-aged child, still going through life as wide-eyed as a teenager and as trusting as a six-year-old.

She loved her store, and it was HER store. She took enormous personal pride in everything about it, and on the occasions when she received recognition for sales, or cleanliness, or managing her controllable costs, she would thrive on those small gestures for weeks. Just an occasional stroke was all that she ever asked.

When she decided to marry the aforementioned gentleman, her entire wedding party was peopled by her co-workers within our company. The planning of the wedding was shared by her restaurant management team, the logistics were performed through our Florida office staff, her maid of honor and all of her bridesmaids were from the company, and I was honored to be asked to fulfill the duties of father of the bride by giving her away. Few things in my business career touched me more deeply than being asked to participate in the most important moment of her life.

The marriage seemed to have a calming influence on Cathie, both in her role as a restaurant manager and at home with Rick. He seemed to treat her better, and for that all of us were grateful. She seemed to be doing a better job of taking charge of her job. Her life and her self-esteem improved markedly. Cathie was, all in all, getting along quite well.

That is, until one day when I received a phone call from our office manager in Florida, who was clearly distraught and could barely speak with me. Lisa was Cathie's best friend in the company, and Cathie had just confided in her that she had been diagnosed with cancer. Because Cathie was not particularly worldly or knowledgeable about such things, annual mammograms were just not part of her personal routine. The result was that by the time she realized something was not right, it was also no longer fixable.

Even so, she stayed on the job far longer than most would have done . . . because it was her life. It was where she gained fulfillment and a sense being part of something. It was where she could lead, and where her followers also loved her. During her final bedridden weeks, she was a brave little girl, constantly being reminded by her many visitors, almost all of them from the company, how special she was to each of them. The kids from her store were frequent visitors, because she was viewed as "mom" by many of them. And she loved that part of her role.

She left this world with no worldly goods, but with a heart of gold and the smile on her face always intact. As we planned her wedding with her, so did we plan her funeral with her. Whatever she asked for she received, I guess because it was the only way we could still let her know how much we loved her. She also helped plan a picture and wall plaque, to be mounted in her restaurant on University Avenue. It was to serve as a reminder that she will always be a part of our company family. She seemed to like that. (The picture and plaque remain on the restaurant wall to this day. It has been fifteen years since her passing. I visited her store just a few months ago, and was told by the present restaurant manager that Cathie's daughter continues to visit the store on a monthly basis, to read once again her mother's plaque and to look at her picture.) All in all, we tried mightily to treat her with the dignity and respect that seemed to escape her much of her life. Her participation in this process seemed to give her a little peace of mind and pride in knowing what she meant to all of us.

Like so many parts of Cathie's life, even the closing was not to be without its bumps. Her one and only final request of her husband was that he promise to take good care of her old and ailing cocker spaniel, her puppy perhaps being her only family member who always gave her the undying devotion that was seldom experienced elsewhere. Rick agreed to do so.

The day after the funeral, Rick took Cathie's dog out into the backyard of their home and coldly fired one bullet through its head.

JACQUIE

If you want to meet Jacqui some time, you need to come and visit our home when we are not present. That is because Jacquie is our dog-sitter. And since we retired a couple of years ago, she has become our bookkeeper and our sometime Jacquie-of-all-trades. In other words, she runs the place. Votes around here are no longer taken. It used to be that I could at least get a tie vote, unless the dogs voted. Well, now it is always 2 to 1, and I am the one. It used to be that I was THE ONE, but certainly no longer. I guess it's a gender thing.

Jacquie came to us through a conversation that Wendy had at her hair saloon – oops: salon! She mentioned that we were tired of kenneling our dogs, one of whom had recently passed on to puppy heaven, and the other of whom was struggling with cancer – these were our beloved standard French poodles, Shadow and Sable. Further, we had just acquired Oliver, a "street dog" from the Humane Society. Oliver was, and is, as cute as can be, but he came to us after surviving on the street, on his own, for the better part of his 1½ years. In short, he had some bad habits. He was very territorial and

Jacquie and Oliver

possessive, would not back down from any dog regardless of size, would hoard his food, and has never seen a leg he wouldn't like to hump. That's our Oliver. With Sable's passing, shortly after Jacquie came to us, Oliver adopted Jacquie as his very own – and pretty much vice-versa. With Jacquie's additional accounting chores, she is here several days a week. Fortunately, Jacquie and Oliver get along quite well. They are both quite intelligent, a little strong-willed, and housebroken.

I should mention that Jacquie is also very popular with the Indiana State Police. Because she is a caring and giving person, and because we happen to live next door to the Governor of Indiana and his family, we have all become acquainted with the Guv's security detail. They are the plain-clothes officers who reside in their unmarked cars on the street where we live. Their duty is 24/7, and they walk the grounds every hour. They are clean-cut and personable and take their jobs quite seriously. If you come to visit us, by the time you leave, I can assure you that they know more about you than we do. We all occasionally chat with them and always wave when coming and going.

Except for Jacquie. Since most of them are of the age of her children, she thinks they need to be better fed than the fast food and/or brown bags they bring daily to their job. Jacquie loves to cook for them. Whether it's one, two, or three cars with officers (which depends on how many of the Guv's family are at home at any given point in time), Jacquie feeds them all. I'm not talking soup and sandwiches. I'm talking home-made meatloaf, hot fried chicken, home-baked fresh pies, a couple of sides, and iced tea in summer or hot cocoa and coffee in the winter. Needless to say, these guys love her and have adopted her just about like Oliver has adopted her. When the officers found out a couple of years ago that sometimes she would drive home late at night from our place and didn't even have a cell phone in her car in case of emergency, they fixed that! They passed the hat and presented her a brand new state-of-the-art cell phone. She cried. I also suspect she will never have any difficulty in the future getting any speeding tickets fixed. I know I'm counting on her!

However, I am not sharing Jacquie with you simply because she is this very nice and kind person who graces our home with her presence. I want to share with you one of my favorite stories of all time. You are about to find out that Jacquie can also be a tough, smart, S.O.B.

Jacquie became divorced after a 25-year marriage and finished raising the three of her five children who were still at home at that time. She supported herself and her family by working her way up through several of the departments at the Hamilton County Court House in Noblesville, Indiana. Her final position was as the Chief Deputy Treasurer for Hamilton County.

Now Jacquie had obviously not been part of the dating scene for quite some time; she already had her hands full with a full-time job and three teenagers at home. Nonetheless, she was, and is, a tall, slender, and attractive woman of Irish descent, with red hair as part of the package. This description will soon become important. Jacquie got fixed up for a date with a single man – handsome, good job, etc. So she said, "Okay, I'll go." In today's vernacular, my daughter Kristin would have said, "Whatever!"

We were off and running. It was time for the first big date, a dinner at a modest, white-table-cloth, neighborhood location. The man gave her directions and asked her to meet him there. So maybe he wasn't quite Joe Cool. She arrived, walked to his table, and helped herself into her chair. (C'mon Joe, get with the program.) They enjoyed dinner and some general table talk. Towards the end of the main course, Joe Cool withdrew a single-page document from his shirt pocket. He said to Jacquie, "By the way, if you are interested in dating me, you need to read this." Jacqui asked, "What is it?" Joe Cool responded, "Just read it." So Jacquie began reading. Her complexion started to redden ever so slightly . . . well, she is Irish. Could it be he was asking her to marry him? Not exactly. Her hair was

now closer to fire engine red, and a few strands could be seen standing on end. She had obviously read at least several lines of Joe's memo. She looked across the table, paused for a moment, probably fixing her glare, and then asked him, in very measured words, "Are you asking me to be your mistress?" Joe Cool replied, somewhat hesitatingly, "Well yes, that's what this is all about . . . isn't it?"

Jacquie now decided it was time to stand up. Not only is she tall, but she has a rather large voice. Her first words, addressed to the dining room in general, were as follows: "I have an announcement to make." (Joe Cool had mentioned to Jacquie during dinner that this restaurant was often frequented by friends of his.) How nice of her to share. Jacquie proceeded: "Many of you know Joe, here. I want to share with you a document that he has just handed me on our first date." Joe whispered to her to sit down. She smiled back, showing just enough teeth to let him know that he is about to be eaten alive. So be it.

Jacquie proceeded to read: "Item One: Our basic dating schedule will be Tuesday and Thursday, each week, from 6 until 10 p.m. You will drive yourself to the restaurant and I will pay for half of your gas. Dinner will be Dutch treat. Item Two: If we have any weekend dates, I will pick you up and take you home, and I will also pay for dinner. Item Three: After all weekday and weekend dates you will come back to my place for the rest of the evening."

Well, needless to say, this restaurant never had a better floor show. No dance band music was necessary. You could already imagine hearing strains of Faure's Requiem in the background. Jaws dropped, eyes bulged, and I suspect there was more than one table where you could hear a loudly whispered "Go girl!"

Jacquie then reached for her purse, grabbed what money she had brought with her, a $5.00 bill and some change, with great deliberation left her money on the table, put her coat on, fixed her gaze on Joe who was slumped well down in his chair, and uttered her parting shot. For the only time in her life, Jacqui said the "F" word: "F___ You Very Much!"

I suspect every eye in the restaurant followed her long-legged, stately stride, as one of America's true feminists made a statement for womanhood everywhere. That's our Jacquie. Don't you just love it?

You go, girl!

ERASTO

Wendy and I have been blessed to be able to travel to much of the world during the past few decades. Included in those travels have been a few trips to Africa, where we have gone on safari, mostly in the countries of Kenya and Tanzania. We love Africa – for the spectacular scenery, the great variety of wild animals, and the hospitality of the people. Certainly, much of the continent is what the politicians call "Third World," and frankly, I see very little progress in many of their cultures or societies called "emerging." The poverty is overwhelming. Diseases that are cured, or at least controlled, in our part of the world are left to run rampant in most of Africa. Crime and corruption control much of the commercial and political structure. Natural resources are, at best, limited, and jobs and opportunities for employment and growth are all but invisible.

Yet, in spite of all this, the people have a certain resiliency about them. Some of their traditions and cultures have remained largely unchanged for centuries. So it is with the herdsmen who tend their cattle on the eastern plains of Kenya and Tanzania. Much of that area is known as the Masai Mara, and it is there that we have met and learned to respect the Masai people and their way of life. They are a nomadic people, moving their small tribes periodically during the seasons of the year, following the availability of grass and water for their cattle.

The Masai tribes are a proud people. They are herdsmen by choice. They would never stoop so low as to become tillers of the soil, not even to feed their livestock or their families. That is beneath their dignity, and they look down upon those who live in such a menial way.

The Masai are also a handsome people. The men are tall and stately and are imposing figures when clothed in their flowing red robes. If you add a spear to complete the picture, you will then have not only a Masai man, but also a fierce warrior who will protect his village and his livestock to the death, whether the attacker is a man from another tribe or a pride of lions lurking in the nearby brush. The women are definitely stay-at-home moms. But their chores are myriad and daunting, as they literally keep the home fires burning.

It is a challenging lifestyle. They usually look older than their years and often die early because of the many diseases they face and the woeful lack of medical practitioners and services. Even so, their ready smiles are infectious, and their children are captivating. They are happy and playful, and they love to perform for tourists. To visit a Masai village is to witness free enterprise, entrepreneurialism, and maybe a little graft, all at the same time.

On our first visit to Africa, one of our stops was with a small tribe some distance west of Nairobi. It was near a one-lane dirt road and was about a two-hour bumpy ride in a bus. We arrived, a little dusty and perhaps with a bruise or two from the journey, but still more than curious as to what we were about to see. Our guide let us know that we might not be invited into the village proper, but he would "Do his best to persuade the chief." Our guide was greeted by the man in charge, no doubt the chief, and an animated conversation ensued. Result: the chief told our guide this is not a good day for a visit, but for a small stipend, he would permit us to enter the village. The agreed upon stipend was $20.00 per couple, $15.00 for singles, U.S. dollars, cash only, and preferably in larger bills. H-m-m. It almost sounded like the chief had done this sort of thing before. However, we had no real way of knowing. The entire transaction was negotiated in Swahili. I guess my only remaining bit of curiosity was that I wondered how much kickback the guide received from the chief!

We all dug into our billfolds and pulled out a $20 bill, or a couple of tens, and away we went. The Chief personally staffed his toll booth and was all smiles as he collected the money. I'm certain he couldn't wait to dash into the compound and immediately distribute the money equally among all the families.

The village was surrounded by a thick wall of bushes, brambles, and small trees, basically impregnable to anything less imposing than a Sherman tank – it was similar to the infamous hedgerows encountered by American troops in the French province of Normandy during the Second World War. The village wall was shaped in a large circle, perhaps about 100 yards across. Inside the exterior wall were a couple of dozen huts, circular in shape and rising up to a dome with a hole in the top where the smoke escaped, plus a tiny entrance/exit passage for the inhabitants. This was home for each family, which usually included a couple of adults and several children of various ages. The home was made from a lattice-work of branches and small trees and held together by a home-made substance whose primary ingredient was cattle dung. The walls did have a certain fragrance, but once inside it was not so noticeable because the smoke from the cooking fire absolutely killed all other odors. There were no rooms; divisions were more like areas within the single room – one for sleeping, one for cooking, and one for eating. All other activities were done outside the circumference of this structure, and probably for good reason. If they stayed inside too much, everyone would probably die from lung cancer. Of course, I did wonder how they were able to find the time and privacy to continue to make more babies. I have never considered that activity to be a spectator sport.

The small village is full of activities: cooking, repairing, making handcrafted items to sell to tourists, constant chores for children, bringing water up from the nearby river, helping prepare food for the next meal, sweeping up goat and cattle dung, and so on. I saw no toys other than an occasional handmade doll. Needless to say, the children are home schooled, although formal courses such as we know are generally not part of the curriculum.

The Masai measure their net worth solely in one commodity – the number of cattle owned by each adult male. Usually, the male with the greatest number of cattle is the chief of the village. Cattle provide a base of power, and it is believed that they provide the chief with great wisdom. They provide milk and meat for the families, as well as the one staple drink other than water. The favorite beverage of the Masai is a combination of fresh milk and fresh cattle blood. I didn't ask for the recipe. The village appeared to be well-fed, though not overweight. I suspect their lifestyle precludes becoming a bit chubby.

Having a fairly strong knowledge of our dairy operation in Ohio, I was more than casually interested in their herd of cattle. I learned that they use no cattle markings or branding to identify each family's small herd. The cattle just all run together and are identified by each one's natural markings. During the day they are guarded from wild animals by the herdsmen and older boys. They are brought inside the village wall at night for their own protection. A man's herd grows slowly because the family eats the beasts about as fast as they produce new calves. The only other primary means of herd growth occurs when a father marries off one of his daughters. She goes to the highest bidder, and the buyer always pays his debt to the father in cattle. Much bargaining and gamesmanship is involved in this process. I would love to hear it sometime as the prospective husband extols the virtues of his cattle and the proud father extols the virtues of his daughter. "Well, she's a great cook," etc., etc. And so it was on our first-time visit to a Masai village.

As fate would have it, we returned to Africa on a subsequent visit a few years later, and I noticed that we would again be traveling in the same area where we had visited the Masai village. I thought that if

we did visit a village again, I would be prepared. I took some toys and candy for children and pictures of our dairy herd to show the village chief.

We arrived at a village a couple days after flying into Nairobi, and lo and behold, it was the same village . . . and the same chief . . . and the same scrawny, dirty cattle. What a treat, and what fun we had. I had brought a couple of dozen bright yellow Frisbees with a Taco Bell logo on them, as well as a similar number of gold-colored kazoos. The children caught onto the Frisbees rather quickly, though the kazoos were a bit more difficult. The older children quickly filled the air with the Frisbees, and we had modest success in forming the first All-African Kazoo Band. Whatever song they were trying to get together sounded like it was written in the key of R. But it was great fun. For the youngest, I had a bag full of M&Ms and small individually-wrapped Hershey bars. By the way, contrary to the advertising, M&Ms melt anywhere they choose in the hot African sun. It was interesting to me to watch children taste, at least in some cases, their first chocolate. It was even more interesting to watch the excitement on their faces and in their voices – and yet they waited their turn as I handed them their candy. Most even attempted a "Thank You" . . . in English. They had no difficulty in unwrapping the chocolates!

It was now getting close to the time for us to get back on our bus. I went to the guide and told him I would like to show my pictures of my dairy herd to the chief. The guide thought that was cool and would gladly serve as the interpreter. The chief was out near the herd as we walked up to him. The guide told the chief why we were there and then told me to show him my pictures. Now these were pictures of a fine herd of Holsteins, big stately cows, clean as a whistle, with well-developed udders, and half again the body size of the herd at the village. The chief and I had a really neat conversation about nutrition, milking procedures, bedding for the cows, and breeding, including artificial insemination. He invited me to walk among his herd with him. The guide told me this is quite an honor, and that he had never seen the chief extend such an invitation before. We walked around, just like a couple of dairy farmers would do back home, looking at the good milkers, remarking about a couple who were lame, and discussing why ours were de-horned. At his request, I gave him a detailed explanation of the procedures used in artificial insemination. The chief was a smart man and really understood the benefits from AI. He was also a proud man and thought that his herd bull was as good as our AI process. This part of the conversation became a little animated, as he invited me over to inspect his herd bull. I normally keep my distance from mature bulls, but the guide told me that the chief said his bull was okay. And here he was! The chief walked up to him, telling me why he was such a good breeding bull, stroking his ears, rubbing and patting his sides, and finally reaching beneath the bull and grabbing the bull's member in his hand. He then told the guide to tell me, "Now here's a REAL bull," "He can service X number of cows daily," and finally, "Here, you take hold of this and you'll see what I mean." The guide could barely tell me that one without laughing. I told the guide to tell the chief that I thought it was time to go, but maybe next time. The Chief said again for me to grab the bull's deal. I responded that I could already tell it was most impressive and I was confident it was better than any AI semen. The Chief seemed happy with that answer. Beads of sweat were still running down my face. Ain't no way I'm grabbing a bull by any body part, anytime, anywhere, and most assuredly not THAT body part.

That's just about the end of that story, but not quite. As the guide and the chief and I walked back towards the bus together, the Chief asked if he could look at my dairy herd pictures again. I gave him the pictures and told him he might keep them. He asked me if all of the 150 cows were mine. (The entire village herd numbered less than a hundred. He owned 17.) I answered yes, all 150 were mine. He smiled a large smile and said something to the guide; the guide laughed; he turned to me and said, "The chief says he would like to adopt you."

This was the beginning of what proved to be our favorite safari, one in which we made a life-time friend. We journeyed through Kenya, seeing much of this lovely and unspoiled country, generally heading southward toward the Tanzanian border. We reached the border on a bright sunny morning, where we were asked to get off our bus. I assumed this was for customs and security checks, but there was no customs house – in fact, there were no buildings at all. There was a tree-limb type of swinging gate with a stop sign on it. But that was not opened for our bus. We were then directed to walk across the border and board the other bus waiting on the other side. Our luggage would be brought over for us. We would be leaving our old bus and driver and guide behind and would be starting with a whole new set-up. We were still on the same Micato Tour expedition, but when we crossed this border, we had to change. Each country required that we use its own busses, drivers, and guides. And that is how we first met Erasto.

Erasto Mollel is a tour guide in Tanzania. He lives in Arusha with his wife, who is named Happiness, and his three children, Eva, Leah, and Lomu. Erasto is a Masai warrior, speaks impeccable English, and has a college degree. He went to live with his grandmother at an early age so that he could go to a nearby school. But he was still among the Masai and was quite sheltered while living with his grandmother. He tells the story of one day when he was about 12 years of age, when he and a little friend decided they would go to "the end of the earth." They knew that it could not be too far, and so they could probably walk there and be back by late that afternoon. They walked toward the horizon, following what they thought was an elephant trail.

They did notice after awhile that they were following two elephant trails, and that the two trails were always side by side, about six feet apart. They proceeded, knowing that elephants migrate great distances and very likely have also been to the end of the earth. After a couple of hours or so, they looked way off in the distance and saw a rather large cloud of dust. Likely a herd of elephants on their elephant trail. The dust cloud was rapidly approaching towards them and seemed to be rather loud. Perhaps they should hide in some nearby brush until the elephants passed them by. They did so and watched as the noisy dust cloud continued in their direction. As they watched closely, they noticed that it seemed to be only one very large elephant. As it got closer, they noticed that the elephant did not have a trunk or any tusks and was covered in metal. And it was now very loud. Erasto and his friend did not move or make a sound as this monstrous and loud iron elephant passed them by on the two parallel elephant paths. They did decide, however, that maybe this was not a good day to go all the way to the end of the earth.

They returned home and Erasto told his grandmother that he had seen an iron elephant. His grandmother smiled, as only grandmothers can do, but she knew then that it was time for Erasto to leave the sheltered life of the Masai.

Erasto was sent to Arusha to live with friends of his family, where he became an excellent student and was accepted into the University. He continued to be an excellent student, nearly always at the top of his class. He did notice, however, that when he was only second in a class, it was always the same girl who was ahead of him. A girl! Well, he had to meet her. How could a girl be smarter than Erasto? He introduced himself to her one day after class, and she was basically unimpressed. But if Erasto is anything, he is persistent. Ultimately, Erasto and Happiness, number two and number one in their class, respectively, began to date, married, and became the parents of three lovely children.

We were with Erasto for a week in Tanzania on that visit, and by the end of that time we knew he was someone special. When we rode with him through his homeland, looking for animals, he would point out trees and plants and flowers we were passing and tell us about them. He would throw in some

history and geography along the way. In the evenings, when the other guides did their own thing, Erasto would invite our group to sit with him around a campfire, where we would talk about religion and politics and he would share with us his culture, his dreams, and his vision. He was, and still is, a young man, but a very special one. We became enamored. His charm, his wit and humor, his wonderful smile, and his intellect, accompanied by a little boy's wide-eyed view of the world, were just too much to resist.

At the end of the safari, I asked him if he had ever been to America. He had not. I asked him if he would like to come. Of course! I said we would get in touch with him after we got back home. I am certain he thought this was just idle talk, and nothing would happen. Wendy and I talked about it, and we decided it was something that could and should be done. We communicated with him by letter and later by phone, and about nine months later he was on his way. We also thought it would be nice to have the brains of the family accompany him, and so Happiness was coming as well. Erasto had never been outside of his country, and I think this was his first plane ride. He would need to do a transfer in Frankfort, Germany, and then fly non-stop to Chicago. I did not want them to attempt a transfer at O'Hare, so I told them I would meet them at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport upon their arrival.

It was a joyous reunion, and I met Happiness for the first time. They had limited baggage for their month-long visit, just a couple of very large duffel bags. We loaded them up and away we went. Chicago traffic is not a nice way to introduce anyone to America. To Erasto and Happiness, the closest thing they had ever seen to rush hour would probably be the annual migration of the wildebeests. We were soon on I-294, heading south, six lanes going both ways, and everyone in a hurry. There are big buildings everywhere, bridges over rivers, and plenty of iron elephants. So what is Erasto's first question about America? "Where are all the potholes?" My, how much we Americans take for granted. Erasto had seen pictures of skyscrapers and airplanes, and probably even of rush hour. But he had never been driven in a vehicle on anything that was not dirt, deeply rutted, and full of potholes. As usual, he was educating me.

To be able to afford to bring Erasto and Happiness to America, we cut a deal. The plan was that he would be part of a public relations program and would speak at various functions and to a variety of groups throughout the northern Indiana market area of our Taco Bell restaurants. I also wanted Erasto and Happiness to go with me as we visited restaurants and to attend meetings of our managers and our Crew Advisory Council. He was heavily programmed and spoke at a number of local service clubs, church groups, grade schools, high schools, colleges, and universities. He was comfortable in every single forum. In fact, he was magnificent.

Erasto knew his audience, every single time, and adjusted his remarks to fit the venue. He did a question-and-answer session with every group; he charmed them, as he did us, with his humor, his intellect, and his smile. He gave an anthropology lecture at Purdue that even wowed the Professor.

He also spoke to college-level students at Manchester College and Taylor University. He even spoke to the junior high Sunday school class at Indianapolis Second Presbyterian Church. Now this is an age group that is impressed by nothing and knows that anyone over the age of 25 is irrelevant. He knocked their socks off. The teacher had to chase them out of the room as the Q and A went into the next class session. But my personal favorite will always be the middle school at North Manchester, Indiana.

Erasto Mollel,
safari guide,
college graduate,
Masai warrior.

North Manchester is a small and rather quiet little town in northeastern Indiana. It is surrounded by fertile farm ground and is home to Manchester College. It is, quite simply, a typical Midwestern town with Midwestern values and customs. But twelve-t0-fouteen year-old children seem to be the same the world over. Full of excitement and wonderment and . . . noise. I was standing with the building principal at one end of the gymnasium as the entire three grades of students began to file into the bleachers on both sides of the basketball court. The noise level rose, just short of pandemonium. Everyone was now present, and the principal said to me that she would need to go to center court to quiet them down before Erasto entered. As she left me to start her short walk to center court, the double doors opened at the far end of the court. Framed in the doorway was a tall – almost majestic – black man, completely dressed in the red flowing robe of a Masai warrior, suitably adorned in beaded jewelry and feathers, and carrying his Masai spear in one hand. Erasto paused; heads turned, some jaws dropped, and silence reigned supreme. I mean a dropping pin could be heard throughout the building. The principal returned to me. Erasto was in charge.

He slowly and quite deliberately walked to the middle of his stage: center court. He regally bowed to one set of bleachers, turned and bowed to the other, still with nary a smile. Remember, these children seldom saw a black man in North Manchester, let alone a legitimate Masai warrior . . . with his spear! He had 'em hooked. And he knew it. He proceeded to tell them about himself and Happiness, who had accompanied him, and about his spear, and his robe, and his tribal initiation into manhood. He closed with his story about the iron elephant. The 45-minute period flew to a close. They stood and applauded and cheered, asked for autographs, etc. The principal and her staff were delighted, and nobody was rushed out of the gym. The next period may have started a little late, but perhaps some lifetime lessons were learned on this happy day in little North Manchester, Indiana.

In many senses, Erasto and Happiness were every bit as much wide-eyed children as were the kids in their audience in North Manchester. They peppered us with questions, missed nothing of what they saw, understood much of what they heard, and regularly surprised us with their observations. I suspect that Wendy's and my two favorite trips with them during their visit were to Wal-Mart, which Wendy visited with Happiness, and believe it or not, to Erasto's absolutely most fascinating place in the entire State of Indiana, the automatic car wash. God, he loved it. By the time they left for their return to Tanzania, I had the cleanest car in the state.

We communicate with them periodically throughout the year and have visited with them twice since that first visit to America. Erasto returned to America a few years after his first visit and stayed with us for a couple of weeks, and then we saw him a couple of years ago on yet another of our visits to Tanzania on safari. We did not know if we would cross paths with him, because we were not with his company on this particular safari. Nonetheless, as we were leaving the airport shortly after our arrival, I asked our new guide if he knew Erasto Mollel. "Of course, everyone knows Erasto." We then told him of our friendship, and our guide said that he thought he knew where Erasto might be at this time. He would try to reach him by radio. In a matter of seconds, he had found Erasto , who was between guiding assignments and was at a camp about a half-hour from where we would be at our first stop. Arrangements were made. Erasto arrived for dinner and the evening and then returned the next morning and was with us until we departed.

I remember well our conversations from that last visit. He is still a young man, full of drive and ambition, wise beyond his years, and smart beyond his education. He wants to do things; big things. He is beginning to feel stifled and likely frustrated. He has few opportunities in which to reach his potential. He is in a poor area, in a poor country, in a very poor part of the world. It is not easy to leave Tanzania, especially with a wife and three children, and it is extremely difficult to get him into this country. He may well be a tour guide the rest of his life – a very good one, but still a tour guide. To be born in our country is to be born into a land of plenty and a land of opportunity. With Erasto, the case is different: he has neither. He was born at the wrong time and at the wrong place. I think he is probably beginning to understand that. Will his realization and frustration turn to anger? I hope not, but I could understand if it did.

He has such great potential and could do so much for himself, his family, his people . . . even his country, if only given the chance. Maybe someday . . . .

Erasto Mollel, in his Masai warrior's garb, complete with spear, giving one of his spell-binding lectures to school children in North Manchester, Indiana.

Erasto and Happiness meet with the KirTac restaurant crew advisory council.

THE SHORT BUS

It is pretty much like any other school bus. It is yellow, has more lights than a railroad crossing, and can back up traffic for miles. It is distinctive only because of its passengers. If you have children or grandchildren in school, you are probably already aware that the short bus is one of the small busses that carry special education children to and from school. The *short bus* designation usually is nothing more than a description of the transportation for those special students. On occasion, less enlightened and/or less sensitive people, both young and old, use it as a term of denigration or discrimination. But that's okay. They just don't know any better.

They don't know how really special it is to ride on the short bus. We have a grandson who rides the short bus. He is autistic, and his name is Kristopher. For Kris, the yellow bus meant really going to school. For several years, he watched his older brother and sister board the school bus every morning and come home on the school bus every afternoon. Finally his day came. He had counted the days until the first day of school that particular year. Prior to that year, he had been driven to and from school each day by his mother. But this was the real thing. He proudly walked out to the curb and waited with Mom until the bus pulled up. The length of his bus made no difference to him. He was now one of the kids. He was riding to and from school, just like the other kids. The cheery greeting of the bus driver probably made it a little easier to let go of Mom's hand. Even so, his nose was pressed to the window as he waved good-bye, and he was likely just a little scared to be on his own.

Today, bus riding is no big deal for Kris. He enjoys being part of the student population, and like nearly all of the other children, his favorite times are recess and lunch. He spends the remainder of his school day half mainstreaming and half being tutored, one-on-one. He has noticed that some of his original classmates have been replaced by newer and younger ones. But that's okay, too. He's still going to school, just like everybody else.

Only Kristopher is not just like everybody else. He has more challenges in many areas, but he still approaches all of them with a wonderfully good nature and a smile on his face. He is a funny kid, a trait that always seems to endear him to his classmates. The little girls, in particular, seem to like to be his surrogate mothers whenever the occasion permits. The fact that he is drop-dead cute probably helps.

But I worry about him. I don't know what the future holds for him. I hope and pray that there is a niche for him in this world, a niche where he can be productive, maybe a little bit independent, where he can feel good about himself and proud of what he can do. I am not likely to be here for those days, and his parents will be available for only some of those days. It will be his brother and sister who, for the balance of his lifetime, will provide for him the love and nurturing that he needs and deserves. They are only teenagers now, but they already have a keen sense of family caring and responsibility for Kristopher. They know that the day will come when Kris will be their sole responsibility. They are both wonderful kids, and it gives me great comfort to know that Kris will ultimately be in their care.

In the meantime, we continue to be blessed to have Kristopher as part of our lives. If you ever want to know how really special these special children are, just go to any special education school and attend a recognition assembly or a performance of any kind. The enthusiasm of the students is exceeded only by the enthusiasm of the families and friends in attendance, which is only exceeded by the

degree of love and support that envelops the room. It is a gathering where there are only gold medal winners, and no one is ever number two.

Kristopher was given the gift of life, and from that point forward, he has been a gift for all of us who know him and love him . . . for who he is . . . nothing more and nothing less. Kristopher is a blessing to us and for us, unlike any other.

For our Kristopher, there is no short bus.

Kristopher with his sister Kaitlyn in 2008.

JAKIE

Earlier in this book, you will find a section that includes the last few years of our Christmas card pictures and the accompanying letters that we have sent each of those years. Likewise, we are blessed to receive similar pictures and notes from many of our friends. I mention in my introduction to our Christmas cards that events involving our grandchildren tend to humanize all of us. Children are so very honest and spontaneous that they often provide for us our own little doses of reality.

On occasion, messages and even pictures become a rather personal, even private communication. That is what Jakie's story is about. It is a story about the spontaneous and totally honest feelings of young children. In this case, it humanizes us and tells us that here are children with sound values and a real sense of what life and death are all about. Because of the personal nature of what I am about to share, I first asked permission to do so. Permission was given with the graciousness which has always been the nature of this family.

A few years ago, we received the annual all-encompassing Christmas card picture of the Jack and Barbara Nicklaus family, including their twenty-one grandchildren. The family portrait included a large framed picture of Jack and Barbara's young grandson, Jake. During the previous year, young Jake was lost in a tragic accident.

A few weeks after the holiday season, Wendy was with Barbara and mentioned how thoughtful it was to have Jakie's picture included in the annual family portrait. Barbara replied that it was actually a family gathering to remember and celebrate little Jake's "first birthday in heaven." Barbara also shared the story that as they were nearly totally assembled for the family photo, one of the smaller children suddenly dashed into the next room, disappearing just for a moment, and returned with the picture of Jakie. It was the innocent wisdom of a child to add the picture of Jake, thus making the photo a complete picture of the entire family.

Later in the year, we were visiting with Jack and Barbara and noticed that a new fish tank had been added to their home. The fish in the tank represented a wide variety, with some rather colorful and unusual selections. We asked Barbara how she chose the fish in the tank. She shared with us that many of them were the choices of the grandchildren, each having the opportunity to choose one fish for "Mimi's" fish tank.

On one recent visit to the tropical fish store, it was the turn for one of the younger grandsons to select his own personal fish for Mimi's aquarium. They found a saleslady and wandered by several tanks of lively and colorful species, finally making a choice. It was then that the young grandson asked; "Mimi, can we buy a fish to put in the aquarium for Jakie?" Of course Barbara answered, "Yes," and said, "Why don't you pick out Jakie's fish? Just tell the lady which one you would like to have." There was a moment of pause . . . a thoughtful child's pause . . . and then Barbara's young grandson asked the sales clerk,

"Do you have any angel fish?"

Ned is the one with the hat. This is part of a Mutual of New York national advertisement printed in *Time*, *Life*, *Look*, *Newsweek*, and *Sports Illustrated*. Berwanger sold me the first of several policies, and this was my reward, such as it is.

DEALING WITH TURKEYS

Few people can claim to have enjoyed two distinctly different business careers, both careers highlighted by dealing with turkeys. I am, of course, referring to turkeys with feathers and turkeys without feathers. Turkeys with feathers are defined as Honeysuckle Whites and Broad Breasted Bronze. Turkeys without feathers are best described as MBA School graduates, primarily those from east of the Alleghany mountains. Now don't get me wrong. There is much to be said for both varieties. After all, what is there not to like about a broad-breasted anything? And we all know that some east-coast MBAs are reputed to be among America's best and brightest.

However, there are other traits of commonality that may not always be quite as helpful as broad breasts and best and brightest. For example, I offer to you the following areas of commonality, not to be confused with common sense.

1. They are both good platform animals, both being "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."
2. Feathered turkeys say, "Gobble, gobble," meaning, "I am hungry." MBA turkeys say anything, but it is always about MORE, as in money, greed, arrogance, and ME.
3. Both types of turkeys are constantly obsessed with climbing their way up the pecking order, stepping on or in anyone and everything along the way.
4. Neither variety takes direction or suggestion from anyone because they already know everything. This is because feathered turkeys are very stupid and non-feathered turkeys are very bright, although the difference is sometimes difficult to distinguish.
5. Both varieties are useless when outside of their comfort zone, whether that zone be the barnyard or Harvard Yard or any of the other Ivy League backyards.

In all of these areas, feathered turkeys have an excuse. They are stupid and are therefore permitted to act stupidly. Conversely, America's best and brightest are not stupid, and therefore should not act stupidly. However, because our feathered friends are taught and nurtured by turkey farmers and our non-feathered variety are taught by esteemed professors from some of our most elite institutions of higher learning, one could easily make the case that turkey farmers are smarter than those who receive the best and the brightest and turn them into turkeys. If you happen not to agree with this premise, you probably reside in a state bordered by the Atlantic. I rest my case.

So would you like to know more about turkeys? Real turkeys? The ones with feathers? Well, here we go.

In the days of Kirby Hatcheries, Inc., my primary employer from 1962 to 1982, our company was involved in every production area of breeding, hatching, and growing America's native bird. (We also were involved in all of the same areas of chicken egg production.) In other words, we did everything except the processing phase and end-product marketing. That was left to the big boys such as Swift, Armour, and Ralston Purina. But we did have strong working relationships with the brand name people, foremost among those being the turkey-processing and marketing division of Ralston Purina whose name-brand turkey was the Honeysuckle White.

The Honeysuckle White was from the K-M breed of turkey, genetically developed by a California breeding organization (based in Riverside) by the name of Keithley-McPherrin. That would be Bob McPherrin and B.A. Keithley. The "B" in B.A. stood for "Birdsell." No kidding. And to top that, their national sales manager was named King Harmless. Hey, you can't make this stuff up! The K-M breed of turkey was acquired by Purina as part of their program to become a totally integrated producer of turkey meat and products, from breeding all the way through end-product marketing. A part of that plan was to build a processing plant in Wellston, Ohio, and make southern Ohio a major turkey production area.

Kirby Hatcheries was also in the turkey hatching business at that time as well as an active Purina feed dealer. Our working relationship with the feed division of Purina enabled us to purchase a majority interest in a turkey hatchery located in Danville, Ohio, which also happened to be the primary franchisee and distributor of K-M turkeys in the eastern half of the country. This acquisition would nicely dovetail the turkey operations of both Kirby Hatcheries and Buckeye Turkey Hatchery in Danville. Buckeye was the largest turkey hatchery in the country at that time and Kirby Hatcheries was the largest egg chicken hatchery in Ohio – which just goes to show that, once again, size is not

everything. To further integrate the two operations, we built the largest turkey-breeding operation in Ohio on our dairy farm near Urbana and purchased a feed mill at Catawba Station, Ohio, to feed our expanded commitment to the turkey industry. We also purchased a 370-acre farm in Clark County, Ohio, where we raised over a hundred thousand turkeys annually for several years. All of this was, of course, in anticipation of breeding and hatching and selling baby turkeys to Purina for their growing and processing operations in southern Ohio. It was about at this time that Purina announced they would be building their own turkey hatchery at MacArthur, Ohio, and our services would not be needed. Oh yes, we could still sell to them our mature fully grown turkeys for their processing plant. But forget anything about breeding, hatching eggs, custom hatching, and so forth. Welcome to the corporate world.

So we turned our focus back to rowing our own boat, without much help from Purina. We changed our Purina franchised feed mill to a Supersweet Feeds feed mill, a division of International Milling Company, and a major player in poultry in the upper Midwest. We turned our turkey breeder operation into a supplier of turkey hatching eggs for Kirby Hatcheries, and divested our majority interest in Buckeye Turkey Hatchery.

Son Brent gathering eggs at one of our poultry farms.
You know the routine: pick up three, drop one.

We did not however, depart from Buckeye Turkey Hatchery without a few stories. Perhaps the most memorable was my first journey to the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, a major turkey production area, and home to major processors such as Swift, Rockingham, and Strickler Enterprises. These were all major players and bought baby turkeys from a number of hatcheries. A major portion of Buckeye's business originated in the valley, and so several times a year our sales manager and staff veterinarian made sales and service calls to the area. I went there once a year, with our sales manager. On that trip, we wrote their next year's baby turkey orders and scheduled the deliveries to match up with their brooder house schedules and the processing schedules of the major processors. This was a full week of sales calls and meetings, during which we wrote business for nearly a million baby turkeys. It was also an educational experience for me.

My first trip to the Shenandoah was with our sales manager, Ben Arnold, from Mt. Vernon, Ohio. Ben had been making this trip for several years and was an old hand at the entire routine. We left on a Sunday so as to be ready to start with our business calls the first thing Monday morning. We visited all the major processors between stops at the several growers, who were scattered throughout the hills and valleys of this beautiful area. Keep in mind, this was a good turkey area because the ground was too hilly for raising crops. Furthermore, the soil was of poor quality for crops, but great for turkeys, because it drained well. The only difficulty was finding a level enough spot for these mountain men to build their large brooder houses, usually in the range of 20,000 to 30,000 square feet. These houses could accommodate one baby turkey per square foot for their first 8 weeks of growth, at which time they were moved to the outdoors. The rest of their life was on range among the hills and streams, trees and bushes, and varmints in the Shenandoah Valley.

Each day during our annual weekly trip consisted of six to eight visits with these mountain men and their brooder houses. None of them were rich monetarily, but they were rich in their heritage, their traditions, and their brooder houses that provided a major portion of their income. Our visits always ended at the kitchen table, where the orders were written and handshakes were exchanged. But this part of the selling ritual was always – ALWAYS – preceded by a visit to the brooder house. With great pride, they would show us all around their facility, pointing out the new automatic feeding system, the revamped ventilating system, or the new infra-red heating devices that replaced their old heat lamps. The final step in the brooder house tour was a stop in the small ante-room, where there were stored tools, some litter, a couple of chairs and table, and the refrigerator where they kept all the necessary drugs, medications, and their own very special, home-made hooch. I mean white lightning! Remember, back then, Virginia was a dry state, but not around these parts. These guys were well-stocked and incredibly proud of their home-made product. So out came the glasses and a generous pour into each of our three glasses. H-m-m, it seemed like the friendly mountain man poured a little more into my glass than the other two. Oh well, it was only 9:00 a.m., and I had the rest of the day to walk it off. Swig it down. Oh my God. Cough . . . sputter . . . gag! Why are they looking at me? And smiling. I get it – I'm the rookie. Okay, so I try to talk. It's hard to talk when your throat is on fire, your stomach is convulsing, and your toes have gone numb. In a squeaky voice, I managed to get out, "This . . . is . . . really . . . good . . . stuff. Best . . . I . . . ever . . . had." I wondered if they could tell it was also the first I ever had. I guessed this was not the time to ask for a glass of chardonnay. Everybody laughed, backslaps all around, which simply changed the location of my pain. And the newcomer had passed his initiation. Whoopee!

We walked to the house, leaving the thousand-proof lightning bottle in the brooder house fridge, and wrote up the order. Then it was time for good-byes, and on to the next mountain. Guess what . . . would you believe it? Same routine. Yep, another shot of Indian firewater . . . Tecumseh would have been proud. Off we went again. Innocently, I asked Ben whether we were stopping for lunch. Sure,

just one more morning call. Thank God! I reached the counter in the restaurant, in bad need of a lot of water, a little food, and a stomach pump. I settled for Pepto-Bismol in lieu of the pump.

Afternoon, more of the same. By five o'clock, I was absolutely in the bag. Ben, on the other hand, had had MUCH smaller pours all day and merely had a slight glow. My glow was more like having consumed a bottle of radium. I think I had dinner. I know I woke up the next morning in my prior day's clothes. I had no idea where I was and only the vaguest notion of why I was there. Fortunately, Ben was still there to guide me, drive me, feed me if necessary, and pour me into bed each night. I thought about calling him my good friend Tonto, but I was not nearly the man that I should have been and certainly nothing like the Lone Ranger would have been. We made it through the week, writing orders for several hundred thousand turkeys and living to tell about it. I do wonder, however, if our sales agreements were actually legally binding. My concern is that for some reason, my signatures deteriorated as each day progressed, and were totally illegible by afternoon. Ah yes, but no sacrifice is too great when you're dealing with turkeys.

Now, please fast reverse back to the Kirby Hatcheries, Inc., big, fancy, state-of-the-art Turkey Breeder Farm. This operation was located in the middle of our 320 acre dairy farm, on a small knoll alongside the tree-lined Buck Creek. This now becomes a story about every mother's dream. You heard me right . . . EVERY MOTHER'S DREAM!!!

Our children have chosen many avenues as diverse and interesting as they can get – for all six of them. A couple of those fit into the category of "Every Mother's Dream." At one time, back in the beginning, we had a race car driver and a street musician. Why they chose those careers, at least as starters, one may never know, but such is the way it is when teenagers enter the work force. Sometimes it is a matter of peer pressure, or perhaps of status and prestige, or simply a matter of needing some spending money. Believe it or not, all of those factors came into play when it was time to hire some high-school-aged boys to work at our turkey breeder farm.

The word went out. We needed a crew of about eight strong young men who were not afraid of physically demanding dirty work, and we preferred football players. Because this was spring and summer work, it meshed nicely with the football season. It was also a great means of keeping in shape during the off-season. After a year or two, we frankly had more applicants than we could use, and it became a little competitive to be chosen to work at Kirby's Turkey Breeder Farm. A real camaraderie developed among the group, with some being with the crew for three years, and a couple joining our company's workforce after high school graduation. One even came back after receiving his college degree in accounting.

It was demanding work. The facility housed 5000 breeder hens and 500 toms. The buildings included two large hen buildings of 15,000 square feet each and one large tom pen. There were also even larger outside runs for the breeders when weather was warm and the ground was not muddy. The buildings contained several hundred nests in each end, as well as an automatic feeder system and a non-freezing water system. The body heat from the birds more than kept them warm in the winter, and huge exhaust fans removed the excess heat and humidity in the warmer months. Between the two hen buildings were the tom pen and an adjacent building that included an office, an egg-handling room, and an egg storage and cooler room. It was a clean and efficient operation and well managed by our farm manager, Bob Olejniczak. "Oley" was an old Pole who worked the kids hard, but they all loved him because he was not just tough; he was also fair and honest with them. And Oley was the one who selected who was to work for him. This was his hand-picked team: big, husky,

football players, from the city (Urbana), and not afraid of hard and dirty work. This was just one step shy of Macho Heaven.

The first day of the breeding season arrived, and the entire group was gathered for orientation and their first experience with turkey AI (artificial insemination). Oh? You didn't know that turkeys are artificially inseminated? My, you have led a sheltered life. The reason domesticated turkeys are inseminated is that over the years they have been bred for two main genetic characteristics: white feathers and large breasts. Consumers have dictated both of these demands. They don't like the old, wild, bronze-feathered birds, because when their feathers are plucked they leave little dark "ink spots" in the skin of the bird. Now, bear in mind, white feathers also leave little ink spots in the skin of the bird, but because they are white, they are not nearly as noticeable – and besides, white suggests prettier and cleaner. Ho-hum. Now let's talk about big breasts! Over the years, through genetic selection, birds with larger breasts have been chosen to be bred with opposite-sex birds with larger breasts. This is because consumers demanded more white meat. Well, why not? It's easier to slice and has less flavor. Go figure. This program has been so successful that today breeding males are so large in the breast that they are front-heavy and cannot balance themselves adequately so as to mount the female and do the "dirty deed." Okay, okay, so now you know more than you ever wanted to know. Ah, but there's more.

NOTE: Everyone who wants to know how turkeys are artificially inseminated, please proceed to the next paragraph. Those who do not wish to know, please skip the next few paragraphs. (But I'll bet you can't!)

The insemination crew is divided into teams and assigned their specific duties. There are drivers, catchers, holders, hen breakers, tom milkers, one inseminator, and one . . . semen sucker. Guess which job is the least popular. Of course, it is the one that presents the greatest risk of . . . whatever. Moving right along, here is what everyone does. The drivers herd the hens, a couple hundred at a time, into a much smaller pen, right next to the tom pen. The toms are similarly herded into a much smaller pen near the insemination pit. Near the pit are the catchers. The catchers have the job of grabbing the turkeys by both legs together and passing the bird on to the holders. The holders of the hens hold the hen by the legs with one hand and expose the hen's genitalia area with the other hand. The tom holders do likewise. You need to know that these hens weigh 30-35 pounds and the toms weigh 50-60 pounds. These are large, powerful birds with very strong legs and wings which have been known to flog more than one high school football player right onto his butt. You absolutely must grab both legs together, in one motion, and hold on for dear life. If you don't, you lose.

Now for the skilled positions. The hen breaker gently moves the featherage from the insemination area and massages the area to get the hen, shall we say, in the mood. The tom milker does likewise but must work a little longer and more deliberately in order to cause the tom to have an ejaculation. Enter the semen sucker. This person is armed with a small thermos with a cork in the top into which a small test tube is inserted, halfway down. The test tube, in turn, has a cork in the top with two holes in it, into which two small glass pipettes are inserted. Each pipette has a small rubber hose attached, one reaching to the tom, and the other to the mouth of the semen sucker. The idea is to suck hard enough to draw the semen from the tom into the first little hose and all the way into the test tube, without sucking so hard as to draw it into the exit tube in the other side of the test tube and up towards the mouth of the semen sucker. Now, in reality, we are dealing with a small vacuum in the test tube, and it is virtually impossible to suck the semen all the way from the tom, up through little hose one, into the test tube, out the air-sucking hose in the other side of the test tube cork, and all the

way up to the semen sucker. But try to convince a teenage male of this fact of physics while he is performing his assigned sucking duties.

That's why I never missed the first day of artificial insemination at our breeder farm each year. The semen sucker would start out by not even sucking hard enough to get ANY semen to enter the first hose. Finally, after several tries and several demonstrations by Oley, they would barely get it to the test tube. Then they really started to gain confidence when they started to believe that no semen would ever leave the test tube and go up the sucking hose to the sucker. There, is that graphic enough? By then, of course, as with most similar activities, inseminating the hen was a no-brainer. Once the test tube had accumulated several cc's of semen, the tube would be removed and replaced by a new empty one and the full tube would become the supply reservoir. A medical syringe would be used to draw 1/30th of a cc and inject it into another small pipette with a small empty rubber ball placed on one end. The other end of the pipette was placed about a half-inch into the hen, the rubber ball was gently squeezed, and poof, little baby turkey poults were about to be made.

All of this was quite difficult for the first couple of weeks. But by then the turkeys were starting to get the idea. And they really liked the idea! This is absolutely true. By the end of the first two to three weeks, the drivers no longer had to drive any turkeys into the smaller holding pens. The turkeys knew what was going to happen and were standing in line to be first. And I am certain I could see smiles in the waiting line. This was true of both toms and hens. In fact, after the toms were finished, they were put back into their own pen and would literally push the fence forward between their pen and the insemination pen. They wanted to come through again. And the hens, immediately upon being inseminated and then released, would stop, shake a little bit, ruffle their feathers, and all but say, "That was pretty good."

Yeah, it was just a job, and probably not every mother's dream. But I can guarantee there is not a single member of those AI crews over the years who has anything but good memories of their experiences, and probably even a little sense of pride. That's my story, and I'm sticking with it.

The home office of Kirby Hatcheries at 1100 N. Main Street in Urbana.

FARMIN' AND FOUR-LEGGED CRITTERS

Four-legged critters are distinct from two-legged critters such as humans, chickens, and turkeys. I also consider dogs virtual two-legged critters, in that they have better character traits than most humans.

My particular area of expertise in the field of four-legged critters is dairy cows. I know this will come as a surprise to many, particularly the herdsmen/operators of the Kirby Farms Dairy operation, for which I provided limited direction and substantial financial resources for the better part of a half century. Okay, so I didn't know a lot about cows, but I did grow to learn and appreciate the challenges and, indeed, the romance of this area of farming.

Our 320-acre dairy farm is located in the southeast quadrant of Champaign County, Ohio, at the eastern portion of the county that is known as Pretty Prairie. The farm has about 220 tillable acres and a 53-acre woods; the rest is pasture for the cows and heifers. It is a lovely setting, with Buck Creek entering the farm from the north and joining up with Dugan's Ditch and the Mill Run, both entering from a northwesterly direction.

The eastern portion of the farm becomes more rolling and lies just west of the Ludlow Line, the point where the Virginia Military Survey started. The Survey was initiated by the infant Federal Government of the United States of America in the 1780s. Nearly all property east of the Ludlow line followed creek beds, horse trails, tree lines, and other such geographical landmarks, as early settlers staked their property lines. The Virginia Military Survey was initiated to provide some semblance of order to further western development and to provide definitive tracts of land to pay soldiers who fought in the Revolutionary War; a very practical solution for a cash-strapped federal government. A casual inspection of any detailed map of Champaign County will clearly show where the Ludlow Line takes effect. Everything east of the line is a hodge-podge of crooked lines, frequently bent, and always meandering along waterways and old trails. This is in contrast to the squared military corners of sections and half-sections of land that begin near Pretty Prairie and proceed largely unbroken until they reach the Rocky Mountains.

It was in 1862 that John S. Kirby purchased our half-section of land, and my children represent the seventh generation to own this family farm. It is no longer an operating dairy, but the tillable acreage, fed by the waters of Buck Creek, still provides bountiful harvests of corn, soy beans, and hay. Our personal involvement in the current operations is limited to funding barn repairs, house remodels and the occasional painting of some board fence. The acreage is cash rented, although I would like to get the old IH 574 running again so I could at least have a mower and a front-end loader to play with. Dick Evans, who lives across the road, is now 95 years young, and will still tell you that his favorite seat is his tractor seat.

I mention Dick with great reverence, because not only is he our neighbor, he is the Mayor of Powhatan! Powhatan is the six-house village into which our farm lane enters and exits. The village was incorporated in 1848. It derives its name from the Indian tribes of eastern Virginia, and especially from the famous Chief Powhatan. Powhatan was a great warrior, leader, and negotiator with the white man. While his life history is legendary, I am confident that the chief would still say his greatest achievement was giving his approval for the marriage of his daughter to an English gentleman. It was the lovely Indian Princess, Pocahontas, daughter of Chief Powhatan, who rescued Captain John Smith, married Englishman John Rolfe, traveled back to England with him, met the king, and lived happily ever after. Or so the story goes.

Dick Evans takes his self-appointed mayoral duties very seriously. While he has no budget, staff, or public assets to administer, he does a bang-up job with signs and proclamations. It was Dick Evans who ordered and arranged for the placement of the north and south "Village Limits" signs on State Route 54. Even more importantly, it was Mayor Dick Evans who in 2007 declared a Sunday in October to be Ned Kirby Day. I think the primary reason Dick issued this proclamation was so that he would be assured of an invitation to a barn party on our farm on that same Sunday. It worked! Dick joined another 80 friends and neighbors from Champaign County as we re-dedicated our 150-year-old remodeled farm house and honored our special guest of the evening, Doris Jones.

While Dick is the oldest resident of Powhatan at age 95, Doris is a close second at 94. I, of course, am much younger and therefore lovingly referred to by the rest of the community as the "Squire of Powhatan." It is Doris Jones whose family farmed for us for several decades during the mid-1900's, first her in-laws, and then her husband and herself. Bob Jones retired from working our farm in 1964, and Doris still lives in the same house at the end of our lane. Very little changes with Doris. She doesn't see and hear as well as she once did, but her memory is as sharp as a tack. A little too sharp. She remembers a lot more about me than I wish she did. And all of it is tempered by a quick wit and a charming sense of humor. She is indeed, a special lady. If only all of us could grow old as gracefully as has Doris.

And that is why she was our guest of honor. We visit with her frequently during the year and usually talk about the old times. Much of the conversation drifts to music, one of our common bonds. She still has both her piano and her organ in her living room, although she has not played for years. Yet that was the inspiration for our barn party. She told me how much she missed going to church and hearing the old hymns and gospel songs. So we arranged for our party to include several instrumentalists and vocalists, and we spent about an hour playing and singing a lot of oldies and goodies. Everybody played or sang, and we all had a great time. More recently, Labor Day weekend of 2008, I brought son Scott and family for a farm visit. We also spent part of a day with Doris as Scott and his daughters played her piano for her. (We had it tuned a couple of weeks earlier – it needed it.)

While the party for Doris in 2007 was a bellringer, it was probably not the most spectacular gathering on the Kirby Farm. That event would have to be the three-day weekend in the fall of 1950 when we hosted the National Plowing Matches. A gathering of 75,000 people watched the plowing matches and attendant parades and beauty queen contest. They also wandered through the Kabin woods, visiting numerous farm implement displays, seed and fertilizer representatives, and government and university educational presentations. Then they could wander past what was at that time an entirely new concept in soil and water conservation. Sort of a tree-hugger's green area. It was a live demonstration of the construction of what was called a farm pond – in 1950, ahead of its time. They could then take a little further walk to the banks of Buck Creek. Here they observed a three-acre plot of corn where superior farm practices were being utilized: high-quality hybrid seed, the latest in chemical and fertilizer applications, and of course irrigation, all with the goal of a 300-bushel yield per acre – an unheard-of number. The plot did not quite make the 300-bushel goal, but it smashed the world record yield into the next county.

The Kirby Kabin

"The beauty of the house is order.
The blessing of the house is contentment.
The glory of the house is hospitality."

This is the booklet that was written by my father and presented to thousands of guests during the National Plowing Matches, held on our farm in 1950. We still present it to our many farm visitors and friends.

IT WAS in 1860 that John Kirby brought his bride to live on this farm. Long before the "Kabin" was built, the knoll on which it stands was a family picnic grounds amid the splendour of the stately oaks and the beautiful view across the valley to the distant hills.

In 1908 Harry and Robert Kirby built the "Kabin" with logs from these very woods. For over 40 years it has stood as a symbol of good clean fun to thousands of folks. It has provided them a place where they could seek relaxation a million miles away from the cares of everyday life.

Generations have grown up among the large sheltering trees. Scampering children playfully roamed the woods, freely absorbing the wholesome atmosphere, and discovering nature's many secrets. And here, too, in this romantic setting, young couples have spent many gay hours which will remain a cherished part of their memories. Yes, people in all walks of life have visited this "House by the side of the road" where peace and contentment reign and the only duty of the guest, no matter what his station in life, is to enjoy himself and reflect on the grandeur of nature.

Just a few steps down the hill is a Spring where one of the first settlers in this part of the Country built his log cabin. Many years have passed and the Settler's cabin is gone but the Spring still runs lustily and, no doubt, the Settler's Ghost is content to abide in the "Kabin" on the knoll.

Today the "Kabin" stands in its natural rustic beauty as a tribute to the memory of those who built it, and to the hundreds of people, now gone, who loved its peace and quiet. Rich in family tradition, it is a hallmark to the ideals for which it was erected; Ideals that are symbolic of the wonderful years of wholesome diversion that the "Kabin" has given so many.

Compliments of
THE KIRBY HATCHERIES, INC.
URBANA, OHIO

There are a myriad of memories associated with this family farm – numerous functions at the Kabin in the woods, and more recently, at the house along Buck Creek. They span the generations and include family picnics, school and college functions, bachelor parties, and hunting forays in the off-season. The essence and spirit of the Kabin has best been captured by one of my cousins, through her eyes and words as a little girl.

Lynn Schneider Gastineau is one of my Schneider cousins, one of three daughters of my Uncle Hugh and Aunt Dorothy, Hugh being the youngest of my mother's four brothers. Lynn just recently sent me her "Day at the Cabin," and I fell in love with it. She wrote this story for a college English paper over forty years ago, telling it through the eyes of the little girl she had once been. I hope you will enjoy it as well, and if you are one of the many to have visited the Kirby Kabin, I am confident it will flood your memory, as it did mine, with warm recollections of wondrous times with special people at the site of the most hallowed of ground within our family farm.

A DAY AT THE CABIN

It's the Fourth of July, and we're going to Aunt Leah and Uncle Ned's cabin for a picnic. All of our aunts, uncles, and cousins will be there. I can hardly wait to go! I wish Mom would hurry up and get everything ready!

At long last Dad has finished putting everything into the car and tells us it's time to go. My sisters and I hurry and jump into the car, and off we go.

The cabin is in the country, and I like to see if I can remember how to get there. After lots of turns, we finally come to an old gravel road that goes up a big hill. Once we're up the hill, we turn right and just down the road is a big white gate with a bell hanging over it.

At the gate, Dad stops and gets out to open it. Once it's open, he gets back into the car and drives through. Then he gets back out, closes the gate, and rings the bell so everyone knows we're coming. I sure wish he'd hurry.

We drive along a windy gravel road until we finally come to another gate. This time the gate is open and we just park by it. Then we have to help unload everything to take inside the cabin.

Right away I see Grandma and I run to give her a hug and a kiss. Then I hurry inside and set my stuff down as fast as I can. I don't want to miss anything!

Aunt Jane and Uncle John are out talking to everyone. They're from Rhode Island, and it's been a long time since we've seen them. Uncle John is my dad's brother, and he is a writer. They don't have any kids so they're always happy to see us.

Uncle Earl, Aunt Marge, Dave, Johnny, Tommy, and Kit, my cousins from Cleveland, are here, too. Uncle Earl is also my dad's brother. He's a lawyer. Dave and Johnny are older but Tommy and Kit are closer to my age.

Uncle Paul, Aunt Eloys, and my cousins Jean and Phil are here. They're older, too, but they live in Urbana, so I get to see them more. Uncle Paul is my dad's oldest brother. Jean is married to Curley and they have a little baby named Paul.

Aunt Leah is my dad's sister. She and Uncle Ned have a son named Ned who's older like Dave and Johnny. He always pays attention to us and is funny. I'm going to marry him someday.

The men play horseshoes and cook hamburgers over a stone barbecue pit. They also shoot at clay targets. Phil even asked me once if I wanted to shoot one too. I wanted to but didn't want the gun to kick and knock me down like I had read in a book at school. The women were in the house talking and getting the food ready for us.

The cabin is really neat. I like to pretend I live in the olden days. The kitchen just has a counter and a pump to get water. The living room has a big fireplace and there are really old guns hanging on the wall for decoration. At the one end of the room are two bedrooms. They have really high fluffy beds---probably feather beds. On the dressers are big pitchers and bowls for water to bathe in just like in my books, too. Over the bedroom is a loft. You have to climb a big ladder that leans on the wall to get up there. I like to climb the ladder when they say I can. I go up and peek at what's in the loft. It's just a couple of beds. I would like to climb onto the loft but I am afraid to – it's so high – and there might be bugs or something.

Out on the front porch are chairs made from branches. There is also a swing. Hanging at the ends of the porch are yokes for oxen. There are some big ones and some small ones. I think the small ones must have been for baby oxen to learn by.

At the end of the front yard is a stile. It's like a ladder, but it goes up one side of the fence and down the other side so you can get over the fence real easy. I've read about them in books and think it's really neat that I've really gotten to climb one.

When we have to go to the bathroom, we have to go outside the second gate to an outhouse. It is a small white building with a door. Over the door is a half-moon cutout. Inside is a wooden shelf with a hole in it. It doesn't smell very good in there, and I really don't like it. I don't want to fall down into that yucky, stinky hole, and there are probably spiders and lots of other bugs in there!

Outside the gate is a pasture for my Uncle Ned's farm. We can walk around the pasture but we have to look out for and stay away from the cows. We also have to be sure not to step on the cow patties – yuck! We can walk down to the spring and feel how cold the water is.

We eat dinner and everyone eats a lot. Everything's delicious. They even surprise my sister Ann and me with a birthday cake because our birthdays are in just a few days. I get embarrassed when they sing Happy Birthday to us.

My cousin Jean had to go back to town for something they'd forgotten. I got to go with her. On the way back, when we saw the stars, she taught me, "Star light, star bright, first star I see

tonight. I wish I may, I wish I might, have this wish I wish tonight." I said it over and over all the way back until I had it memorized.

Finally it's getting late and we all have to go home. We pack up everything, give everybody hugs and kisses, and get back into the car to go home. I hate to leave – I loved being with everyone and had so much fun. I wish we could go to the cabin every day. I know I can't, so I just think of the fun I'll have the next time we go.

One of the more memorable days on the farm was when Ned, Scott, and Gregg were teenagers. It had been a wet spring and our dairy herdsman had not had time to empty and spread the manure from the manure pit. The cows did not know this. They continued to poop in the barn lot, and it continued to be scraped and pushed into the manure holding pit . . . to overflowing. So one day I took the three oldest boys, lined up three tractors and spreaders, and got on the Bobcat front-end loader. We started at 8:00 in the morning and finished at 6:00 that evening. We had a couple of equipment breakdowns and a short pause for lunch. When it was all said and done, the pit was empty and 68 full loads had been loaded, driven to the pasture, and spread in an orderly fashion. The herdsman was eternally grateful (it would have taken him weeks), and we were all quite proud, a little full of ourselves, and a lot smelly. So smelly that we were forbidden entrance to our home – OUR HOME! – and had to strip in the garage and shower before sitting down at the dinner table. The Wicked Witch of the Home had spoken!

Dairy farming, like all of agriculture, is a journey of peaks and valleys, many of which arrive in most unusual fashion. The production of milk, with all of its attendant nuances, is a complex and sometimes rewarding experience. If you like starting at four in the morning and finishing around eight at night, seven days a week, all year, then it is a rewarding experience. If you like defining a successful year as one where you paid all of your expenses and covered a portion of your personal labor, then it was a rewarding experience. If you like dealing with the uncontrollable variables of cost of feed, price of milk, milk inspectors, equipment breakdowns, weather, disease, pestilence, and plagues, then it is a rewarding experience. There is, however, something to be said for the pastoral scene of a herd of Holsteins grazing contentedly along the banks of Buck Creek, in the shade of the large oak trees, while their new-born calves frolic with one another in the late afternoon sun. So buy a painting.

Even so, I miss the dairy part of the operation. It is easy to fall in love with. One of my great love affairs was with an elegantly gorgeous young Holstein cow named April. It was early on in my dairying experience, when I was still innocent and naive enough to think we could make a profit. Certainly one of the ways to do so was to improve on the herd bloodlines. So we went to a herd dispersal sale over near Woodstock. We bought three or four nice-looking cows for about $300 each, and then towards the end of the sale, along came this gorgeous four-legged critter. Her name was April and she was elegant, stately, majestic, and a four-year-old. She was also the lead cow of her herd. Her papers (breeding, production, butter fat, etc.) were impeccable. I was in love. My herdsman sat next to me, probably in amusement, as I stayed with the bidding, right on through our agreed upon ceiling of $500. I knew the auctioneer personally – Merlin Woodruff, a Champaign County native, who grew his auctioneering career and reputation to state-wide and national levels. Merlin was a little early for television, but I know he could have made a great TV living selling sweepers or detergents or snake oil to the masses. Merlin had a great charm, a wonderful wit, a great knowledge and love for his business, and . . . he was honest. He also knew most of his buyers at every

sale. He knew he had me with April, and worked me up to $950! He got me, but I got her. In the early afternoon, we gently loaded her into the cattle trailer for her ride over to our farm. The herd was in the nearest pasture as we unloaded our five new cows.

Everybody came over to greet and sniff and other such stuff. It did not take long for our old lead cow to greet the lead cow (April) from the other herd. They did not like each other. They stared and then mooed and aggressively sniffed and nudged and then both realized leadership of the herd was at issue. My herdsman, meantime, was watching me. He already knew what was going to happen. Suddenly there was bellowing, and foot stomping, and the weaving and swaying of bodies and heads. I looked at the herdsman in alarm and asked him, "Are they really going to fight it out?" "Yup." "Physically?" "Yup." With that I heard the loudest of flesh and bone collisions, as they both ran headlong into each other. And they did it again and again; full force. I shouted at him to stop them. (He's right next to me.) He answered "Nope." (pause) " It won't last long and they'll both be okay." Yeah, right. They're gonna kill each other and I won't even have hamburger to show for my new purchase.

He was right. It was over as quickly as it started. Everybody went back to grazing, and at about four o'clock the lead cow began her stroll from the pasture, towards the barn lot and milking parlor. The remainder of the herd fell in line behind her, in their normal societal order. April instinctively knew the way. She was still majestic and magnificent as she assumed her new leadership role. I was still in love.

April was a great producer of milk and calves. After about three years, she sadly ate a piece of baling wire that was imbedded in a bale of hay. The vet did what he could as she lay there in her stall, slowly bleeding to death internally. He finally put her down, and it was then that I realized that it wasn't all about dollars and cents. But there was a sense of loss . . . of a friend, one whom I admired and respected for her dignity, her strength of character, and her leadership. I can still look over that same pasture to this day and remember, ever so clearly, that first journey of April's up the hillside to the barn lot at the head of our herd. Maybe that is why dairymen, at least the old-timers, are incurable romantics.

Finally, one day, it was time to get out of the dairy business. It had never been very profitable and never approached any reasonable return on investment – an O.S.U. business school measuring stick. But like so many, I fell in love with the non-business aspects. In all honesty, the decision to get out was really made for me. All I had to do was develop an exit strategy. It seems as though the herdsman had taken several cows of his to a sale in Michigan. He needed some cash. What he didn't tell me was that he had taken several of my cows to Michigan and sold them as well. That was bad enough, but he also returned with what proved to be a bad check. Long story short – the check never cleared, and our herd size seemed to continue to diminish in size, in little dribbles. By now there was nothing left in the herd but my own cows.

I met with our lawyer and our vet and we decided that the trends were bad and ongoing. Yet how do we protect our investment and get the cows off the farm and out of the control of the herdsman, whose dairy husbandry was diminishing about as fast as our herd numbers? Answer, by consensus: we have an old-fashioned herd-rustling. In other words, we go in the dark of night, with several cattle-hauling semis, and steal our own cows. The time and date were set; the trucks and drivers were lined up; the sheriff was alerted, just in case, and away we went.

At 2:00 am a dairy farm is rather quiet, so three fast-moving semis and a couple of chase cars make a lot of dust and engine noise. Also, cows are not accustomed to being awakened in the middle of the

night. Lots of mooing. The cows were loaded onto the trucks and we were out of there in less than an hour. A light never came on at the farmhouse, but surely they heard us and got it figured out. The cows were sold, and that was the end of dairying at 4527 East State Route 54, Urbana, Ohio.

All three current generations of our family love to visit the farm. There is an old tire swing hanging from a nearby tree, a horseshoe pit, a canoe to paddle in Buck Creek, and an empty milking parlor and cow holding pen, now a party barn. Our grandchildren have great fun on their visits, but I wonder how much they are missing with no cows to milk, no heifers to feed, and no calves to birth. I wonder . . . how much?

KIRTAC

KirTac was a journey of twenty-four years for our family, and it also proved to be our trip of a lifetime. It provided us a comfortable living, a means by which to raise and educate our six children, and a vocation that was fulfilling in every sense of the word.

Like most start-up businesses, the early years were a little bit touch and go as we felt our way through the maze of early challenges and opportunities. Being a fast food franchisee with a billion-dollar franchisor which was owned by a multi-billion-dollar conglomerate was all new to me. There we were, a brand-new owner/operator of a single Taco Bell restaurant in Noblesville, Indiana. Our franchisor was headquartered in Irvine, California, and in turn was a wholly-owned subsidiary of PepsiCo, part of Pepsi's restaurant division along with Pizza Hut and Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Pepsi ran their operations from an ivory tower in Purchase, New York, while Taco Bell was soon relocated to a brand new state-of-the-art shiny glass twelve-story office building in a lovely section of Irvine. KirTac was headquartered in the basement of our house on Laurel Lane in Noblesville, Indiana. Our office staff included one bookkeeper. The rest of the overhead was Wendy and myself. This was how one started up a new entrepreneurial enterprise in early 1982.

We started with a single restaurant, although our initial agreement with Taco Bell included purchase options for two more restaurants in ninety days and three more restaurants to be added twelve months later. Thus within fifteen months we were running a company of six Taco Bell restaurants with a combined annual sales volume of just over two million dollars. This enterprise was similar in size to Kirby Hatcheries, but with one major difference. It was profitable. Granted, our profit the first year was quite small, but at least we could see a light at the end of the tunnel.

We had a lot of debt to service, with the collateral being provided by our farms in Champaign and Clark Counties in Ohio. We had experienced 20-22% interest rates near the end of our ownership of Kirby Hatcheries, but interest rates were now rapidly declining to a manageable level, and taco sales were increasing. The sales levels of those first six restaurants ranged from a low of $280,000 at Logansport to a high of $450,000 at South Kokomo. During the first full year of our operation of all six, two lost money, two broke even, and two were profitable. All we needed was an increase in sales.

Enter John Martin. Here was an original North American crazy, a Californian in mind and spirit: fast-living, Harley-riding, fun-loving, and the new CEO of Taco Bell. In very short order, I came to realize that John was about a half-bubble off center. His mind just didn't work quite like everyone else's. He was inventive, creative, manipulative, and above all else, driven. He knew what he wanted and by God (synonym for John), that's the way it would be. Now remember, we had just recently signed up for this adventure. I just sort of assumed this was normal.

Later that year, I was elected to the national board of franchisees (FRANMAC), personally representing the northeast part of the country. I soon learned from several of my fellow board members that John's way of doing business was not normal. This Martin guy was going to change things – a lot of things. This was not good, and he needed to be drawn and quartered, or at least imprisoned until our twenty-year franchise agreements had expired. So right away it looked like our board, including several new members, was a little divided in its opinions. The obvious answer was to hold elections and find some new officers. When it came time to vote for a new president, everyone else took a

single step backward while I was tying my shoes, and somehow or other I was the new president. This also was not good.

Taco Bell President John Martin (left) and his second-in-command Zane Leshner (right) join Ned and Wendy in Indianapolis for their company's annual Recognition Banquet.

Nobody else wanted or would take the job until well into my third year. Everyone was either pro-John or anti-John, and as you can imagine, a group of a dozen or so entrepreneurs – headstrong, iron-willed, and dealing with our financial futures – were not going to find much room for compromise or indulge in much constructive give and take. The bottom line was that it was difficult to function as a president; it was more like being a referee. Ultimately my role evolved into being the messenger between FRANMAC and TACO BELL.

You've heard the old saying about shooting the messenger? That would be me: incoming from both sides, no foxholes for cover, uphill both ways, etc. The distance from the board room to the corner office (John's) was only a few steps, but it often seemed like miles. I mean, how do you tell the president of a multi-billion dollar company that his franchisee community thinks his ideas, plans, and modus operandi basically suck? And then after I would do my best sugar-coating on that mission, I would be given John's response, which usually necessitated my learning a few new and colorful words, generally revolving around who was in charge and knew what was best for franchisees. And so it went.

After about three quarterly meetings following this routine, a knight in shining armor rode up and attempted a rescue during one of my slow-moving twenty-step treks towards John's office. Okay, it really wasn't a knight in shining armor, and his name wasn't Lancelot. It was more like a white shirt and tie, and his name was Zane. Zane Leshner was the corporate representative at our board meetings and was also John's strong right arm. (Some on our board viewed him as John's hatchet man.) Well, after all, he was a lawyer!

On this particular day, Zane invited me into his office before I reached John's, sat me down, and asked me what I was going to say to John. I answered that I didn't have any idea . . . not surprising to Zane. Zane responded by saying something along the lines of: "Here's what John is expecting, here is how you need to explain it to him; add this and subtract that; here is how he will answer; here is what he means; and here is how you will need to respond on his behalf to your board." At the end of that conversation, Zane gave me some advice along the lines of how it is done in the big corporate world. It was advice I have never forgotten. I have used it many times since that chat with Zane, and it became the catalyst for a friendship that remains to this day. It was, quite simply, "Don't personalize this stuff. Just continue to do your job as honestly as you have been. As long as you continue to keep the respect of both sides, this will all come together." Zane was right on all counts. It did all come together and the Taco Bell story is now legendary. The franchisee community is filled with multi-millionaires, and John and Zane retired from Taco Bell in similar circumstances.

IT'S ALL ABOUT PEOPLE

You might well ask, "Is it really all about the numbers?" Well, not exactly. Certainly it started that way. If you can't bring it to the bottom line, there is nothing else to be done. On the other hand, if you are fortunate enough to make a profit, then other doors of opportunity open up. Sure, we still had a lot of debt, and we had to manage for a profit, and there were always the tough calls to make and complex decisions to render. But KirTac did provide us with the platform from which to launch our own little brand of entrepreneurialism. So was it really all about the numbers? Nope . . . it was all about the people.

Fast food is a bottom-feeder. We are at the low end of the food chain. Who do we employ? We get the beginners; the first-job kids, the unemployed and the unemployable, and those on probation and work release. Our family represented three of the five college graduates in our company of six hundred.

We also had a lot of single moms (and in many cases where there was a husband, our women who were in management earned more than their spouses.) Where else can a female today, unmarried and with kids, maybe a high school diploma, and no experience, enter the workforce and have the opportunity to be making forty thousand dollars plus bonus in five years or even less? Where else can she go even further and become district manager and even director of operations, bringing home a gross paycheck of $70,000 to even more than $100,000 . . . with a high school diploma?

I remember well when my oldest friend from childhood was visiting us a few years ago and I took him for a tour of our office building on a Saturday morning. We entered our lobby, which was filled with plaques of recognition, numerous group photos of our management teams, and a trophy case full of acknowledgements of their successes. We peeked into the various offices and then proceeded downstairs to the conference and meeting room. Joe and I passed through a hallway where the walls were dubbed "The Wall of Fame." Those walls contained dozens of small plaques with the names of our managers who had been recognized since year one of our company. They included Restaurant Manager of The Year, Assistant Manager of the Year, Shift Manager of the Year, and Tiger Award of the Year. There were even two national recognitions, one each from Taco Bell and KFC, where our managers had brought their store to a performance level among the top ten in a system numbering more than six thousand restaurants. Joe and I entered the conference room, and it was more of the same. The walls were lined with framed sayings and quotations of inspiration and perspiration, and the far wall had a twenty-four-foot, four-shelf wall cabinet filled with memorabilia, plaques, pictures, and fun stuff that cheered our teams on and reminded them that they are special . . . and part of something special. It was at this point that I paused to catch my breath and Joe looked me square in the eye and said, "Kirb, this is the American Dream."

Coming from Joe, who has traveled the world for over forty years in his Washington, D.C., law practice, it was a wonderful statement of affirmation. I had never thought about it in quite those words, but Joe knew. He understood what we were trying to do, and why. He has been in nearly every corner of the world, has worked with democratically-elected government officials, private business operators, royal families, dictators and despots. He has formed, negotiated and nurtured programs and deals from A (agriculture) to Z (zoos). He has seen the successful economies of Europe and the starving peoples who populate many of the countries of Africa and Asia. He has experienced the emergence

of newly formed democratic societies and the emergence of third world countries. For Joe to have characterized KirTac as the American Dream meant more to me than he will ever know. It still does.

Now some will say that $40,000 is not much money these days, and that is correct. It will provide enough for food, clothes, shelter, and a car in the garage. But wouldn't it be nice to have a life beyond the four walls of Taco Bell restaurants? Well, it's tough to do without money. Plus, for most of our hundred or so restaurant management team members, their closest friends were often their at-work partners. After work, they only had time to go home and be mothers and fathers.

About 80% of our restaurant level management staff was female. They often brought a high degree of maturity and sense of responsibility. They were also less of a problem in the areas of lying, cheating, stealing, and such good stuff as verbal assaults and sexual harassment. (Yep, that's the world we live in.) Sadly, they didn't score as well as they might in the areas of self-respect and self-esteem. Many of our women were divorced, and many more should have been. Relationships were often abusive, and many children also suffered. As our son Eric mentioned after his first six months on the job with KirTac, "If I ever need to find another job, I could be a writer for the Jerry Springer Show."

In spite of all this, the management teams were important to the welfare of our company, to say nothing of the welfare of themselves and their families. These people needed a life beyond the four walls of a Taco Bell restaurant. They needed to have things to look forward to, to dream about, to plan for, and to talk about. Above all else, these things needed to make them feel positive about themselves, their jobs and their place in life. In many cases, a sense of family, of belonging, of being respected, loved and needed, all were part of a potential equation.

The equation started simply enough, with a Christmas party for all levels of management in our home the first year. At that time we had three restaurants plus an office staff, so it was a gathering of thirty or so with spouses. We decided we would have a cocktail hour, a nice sit-down dinner, and a few after-dinner recognitions and some other funzy stuff. We did not suggest to them what to wear, because we wanted everyone to feel comfortable. Well, the night arrived and everyone was on time. (They had already learned about "Ned-Time.") And for attire, you've never seen so many old prom dresses in your life. Wendy and I had underestimated the importance of having dinner at Ned and Wendy's. They took us up the learning curve. This was more than a night out. This was at Ned and Wendy's . . . in a house on a lake . . . with a rec-room and a built-in bar . . . well stocked . . . WELL STOCKED! (It wasn't so well-stocked after the party. It was, shall we say, a spirited gathering.) There was a sense of family, togetherness, and just lots of good vibes. Wendy and I both had the feeling that this was, indeed, the start of something new. Years later, when we were still doing our Christmas and recognition banquets (in large and very nice facilities, attended by over two hundred guests, both in Indiana and in Florida), it was fun to remember our modest beginning in the basement of our home on Morse Lake. Those latter parties evolved into some gorgeous gowns and even a smattering of black ties, pre-parties at beauty parlors and hair salons, arrival by limousines, and major guests including senior staff from Taco Bell, KFC and YUM! Brands.

By our third year in business, we decided to do something a little more adventuresome. We wanted to really knock their socks off. The company had just finished a very good year, in no small measure due to the quality of the restaurants being managed by our teams. We had dropped a few hints about a little trip the next year and let it be known that we would make an announcement at the Christmas party. Party night arrived, cocktails, dinner, and awards were completed, and it was announcement time. I suspect our managers were thinking along the lines of a weekend in Chicago, or possibly a several-day excursion, or perhaps, just maybe, a three- or four-day Caribbean cruise. We

had been sowing those kinds of thoughts for the past few weeks. Well, there's nothing quite like exceeding expectations. We proceeded to tell them to start working on getting a passport, because we were going to England for eight days in April. To be eligible for this trip, you had to be a restaurant general manager and have been in that position for one year or more. There were no performance criteria because we told them we expected them to perform. The room exploded.

This trip did not include lower-level management or spouses. There were a couple of instances where spouses were not real happy with the plan. On the other hand, there were several instances where the managers were just as happy that spouses were not included. To be fair, it was understandable that as people who had never before traveled abroad they didn't know what to expect. Various concerns along the lines of insecurity, eight straight days, home sickness, never flown before, all entered the picture for travelers and spouses alike. Nonetheless, we viewed it a little differently. We believed it to be an opportunity for personal growth, not just in the fields of history, geography, and culture, but also in self-confidence and self-esteem. And when we would bring them home, and they would be visiting over the back fence with a neighbor, or back at church the next Sunday, or simply sharing with their children, we wanted their listeners to say, "Wow! You're really somebody. I wish I had a job like that!" And that's pretty much the way it went.

Within the franchise community of Taco Bell, the trips became a trademark for KirTac. We took an annual trip every year thereafter with our RGMs and all of our above-store management and key staff. The second year we decided to challenge the language barrier issue and went to France. We did Paris in four days and then traveled the Loire River Valley and chateau country, visited the Normandy coast with all of its WWII history, and returned to Paris by way of Giverny, visiting Monet's home on the way. Our trips were run on Ned-Time, with everyone on the bus by 8:00 a.m. We finished late in the evening after we had been to the Moulin Rouge, or to a dinner cruise on the Seine, or to the Paris Opera House, or to a special ballet or chamber music performance. We saw, heard and tasted all that was available. We generally closed the neighborhood or village bar in the evening, with Wendy and I crashing earlier than most of the rest. But at 8:00 a.m. the next morning, everyone was back on the bus and ready to go. I am so glad that Wendy and I never sent them. We always took them. It was as much an enriching experience for the two of us as it was for our managers. We all captured one another's hearts and minds, and we became a family and support group . . . for each and every one of us.

In succeeding years, we visited Italy, Holland, Greece, Israel, Egypt, Russia, Ireland, Austria, Germany, Canada and China, not in that order. We also revisited several, including France, Italy and Greece. We generally did not do cruises, unless there was a lot of shore time, and we seldom did more than one country per trip. These were not vacations, they were expeditions. For most, it would likely be the only time they would ever visit that particular place. We wanted them to do it all, as did they – and as did we!

On our trip to Ireland, our managers visited the US Embassy and met Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith (in the blue suit), the sister of President John F. Kennedy.

Our managers in front of St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow, during our trip to Russia.

The management team of one of the many KFC restaurants in Shanghai, China, gathered for a picture with Colonel Sanders, as played by our manager from North Manchester, Indiana, Bonnie Fields. Note the Indy 500 hats we gave them.

Needless to say, it was also an interesting experience for those not on the trip. We left behind a skeleton office staff, one senior management person, and a bunch of assistant managers running their own restaurant, by themselves, for a week or longer. Remarkably, it always went well. Perhaps it was viewed by the assistants as an opportunity to shine. Whatever the case, we decided that the success of the RGM travel program was worth expanding to the next level down.

About our sixth year, we began an assistant manager trip of one day, taking advantage of an Indianapolis travel club called Ambassadair. It was part of the ATA airline, and the Ambassasdair program was done with chartered ATA jets. Thus the flights were always direct and non-stop, and they always went to fun and interesting destinations. The trips sometimes used more than one jet; our group alone numbered in the range of sixty or seventy. Because of our size, we always had our own bus or two and our own guides. Our most popular and most frequented destination was New Orleans for Mardi Gras; we went there about a half-dozen times. We also went to New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Niagara Falls, Mackinac Island, Key West for Fantasy Fest, and Quebec City for Winter Carnival. We always had some first-time flyers on these trips, and we often had one or two who had never been outside the state of Indiana. Now there's a real opportunity for enrichment!

However, no enrichment program should be only fun and games. We still wanted to get the attention of all levels of our staff in whatever way possible. This effort included attempting to reach our crew level people: those many youngsters who came to us with no training, limited education, few role models, and no experience in the work place. If fast food is the bottom of the food chain, they must

have often viewed themselves as the bottom of the human chain. We needed to address that. If they're with KirTac, they're a cut above. How better to demonstrate that than to show them who has it tougher than themselves?

Enter Habitat for Humanity. One day about a decade ago I walked into the Habitat office in Lafayette, Indiana. I sat down with the manager and told him I wanted our company to sponsor a house. So far, so good. He was used to corporate sponsors – those who give them the money and then Habitat gets the volunteers to build the house. However, I told him that our deal was to be a little different. We would pay for the house, but only if Habitat would permit our people to build it. That really perked him up. He had never been approached with both free money and free labor. As soon as he caught his breath, he was able to say yes. Naturally, Habitat still provided the skilled work such as plumbing and electricity. The real hook on this was that our labor was to be for crew people only; no managers! The crew loved it. Also, they had to volunteer. We knew that they had no money to give, but they could always give of their time. We would provide transportation to and from the job site, along with a free lunch. We would pull a group from a different restaurant each day, rotating until the job was done. The volunteer restaurant each day would be staffed by excess crew people from other nearby stores of ours. Sure, it took a little logistical planning and execution on our part, but it received enthusiastic support from our management teams and volunteers from our stores that numbered nearly two hundred. That's right – two hundred!

What fun they had! Their gang from their store, with no managers, spent a day on the job with Habitat for Humanity. They all got a free tee-shirt from us; they were allowed to wear them at their restaurant as part of their uniform while we were building the Habitat House. We wanted our customers to know of our support of Habitat and notice the pride with which those shirts were worn. I don't know what all these crew kids may have learned while donating their time for Habitat, but they all learned more about the gift of giving, and that there is always someone in this world worse off than themselves. Every one of our people personally met the recipient of that house, a young mother with two small children who had escaped from an abusive relationship with nothing more than the shirts on their backs.

At that year's Christmas party, we invited the recipient of our Habitat house in Lafayette to join us at our party and say a few words to our group. In anticipation of her attending our party, our managers got together and collected enough money to present her with a full wardrobe for each of her children, as well as a pair of bikes. She, in turn, told our group how much her house meant to her and her children; she told us that we had given her family a new life. There wasn't a dry eye in the house as we all celebrated the gifts of recognition, the gifts of giving of our crew volunteers, and the gift to us all of the Christ Child.

Three years later, we did a second Habitat house in Kokomo with another two hundred volunteers, a home for another mother and her two young daughters. Emil Brolick, President of Taco Bell, flew in from California at our invitation to present the keys of this new home to the family. He also partnered with YUM! Brands and presented each daughter with a new bicycle. It was a very nice day for us to be a small part of corporate America.

The Taco Belle yacht, all decked out for a company party in New Buffalo, Michigan.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Let me talk a bit more about the entry-level young people who staffed our restaurants. They are good kids. They mean well and want to please. Certainly they have their moments, but they are teenagers, right? What they don't bring to us are many of the basics that most of us learned at home, or at school, or at church, or at Scouts or Boys and Girls Club, or somewhere. In that regard, they are really not coming from the ranks of the unemployed. They come to us from the ranks of the unemployable.

Many are not familiar with responsibility, authority, chain of command, or much of anything that has to do with organization and discipline. Sadly, and all too often, they can't read well, can't count well enough to make change, and have no concept of something called good grooming. Now I acknowledge that minimum wage is not very much money, but nobody I know starts anyone at minimum wage anyway. The point is, whatever the level of pay, a high percentage of these people spend their initial time with us learning not only the job skills, but also basic living skills. The latter include how to speak, how to dress, how to add and subtract, how and why to shave, and which body parts should not have jewelry displayed. You would think we were asking them to climb Mt. Everest! "Comb my hair? What's a comb?" "Shoe polish? Huh?" "What grease stain on my shirt?" "What do you mean tuck in my shirt more? What butt crack?" And the beat goes on . . . and on . . . and on.

But most of them do get it – eventually. We have to explain to them that they are now in the workplace and the person they have to please is the customer. We tell them the customer is always right, even when the customer is wrong . . . even when the customer is dead wrong. And we also tell them that the customer signs their paycheck. No customer – no check. To make that point, we show them our standard paycheck and have them note that the signature on their paycheck is as follows: "I.B. CUSTOMER." Now is that hokey, or what? We have done that since our company's very first payroll. Well, somebody's got to sign it.

Now remember that, by some stroke of genius, the fast-food industry has decided that the very person we want to represent us in our first, last, and only contact with the public is one of these creatures I have just introduced to you in the preceding paragraphs. That is how, and by whom, we choose to meet and greet the public. We choose to do this. There is no manual that says to do it this way. There is no directive from those misguided corporate operatives telling it must be that way. It's by choice!

So let's make some lemonade from these lemons. After all, we're entrepreneurs. We're always about a half-bubble off center. (That's carpenter lingo – look it up.) When staffing the register in our restaurants, we have one priority above all others for our register operators. That single item is:

SMILE!

When is the last time your teen-age son smiled? It was probably about the age of 12. Girls are somewhat better. Well, if these people are going to represent our company to the public, our customers, they're going to have to be the best we have to offer. How can we make that happen? We decided to send them to school . . . CHARM SCHOOL! Our own little piece of academia, right in the meeting room of our very own office building. The course was always taught by myself and the director of operations for our company. This whole thing was important to the two of us and we wanted them to get that message. We had them play-act and then critique each other. They played both roles of operator and customer. Some of them were really nasty customers. They threw each

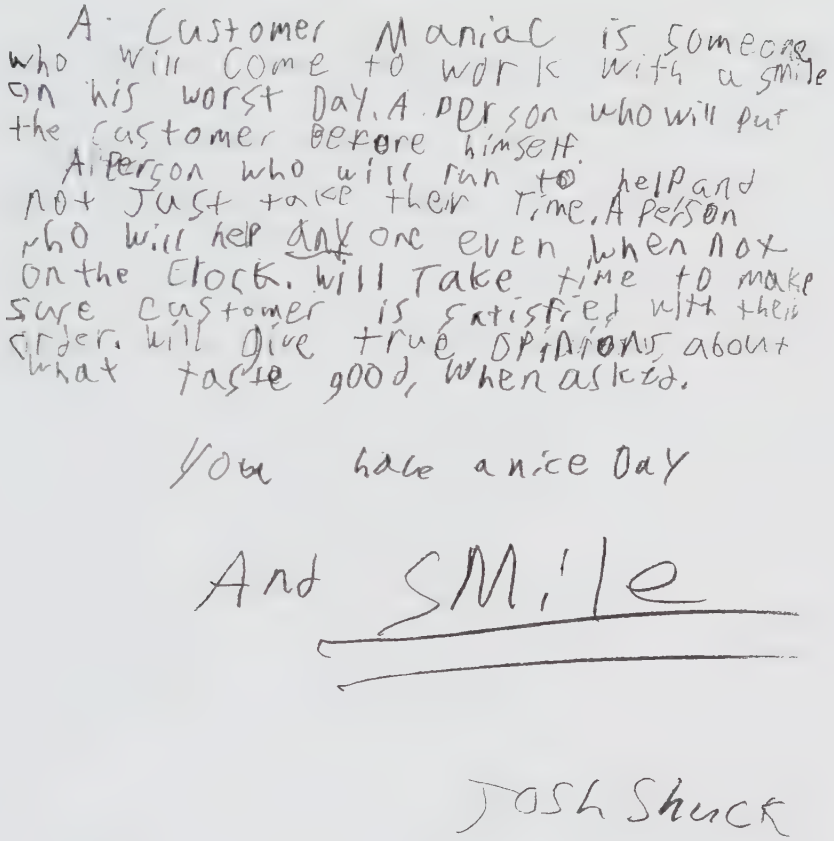
other all kinds of curveballs. We also had a good time. We talked about the fact that they were our primary contact with our customers. We gave them great latitude in their dealings with our customers, even to the point of having them address all but the most serious of customer complaints. We empowered them to give away whatever free food was necessary to please the customer. We simply told them that they couldn't give away enough food to break the company. The food giveaway thing was particularly difficult for them. They often knew that the customer was lying to them or playing them for more free food. They had a lot of trouble with the concept that the customer is always right, even when they are wrong . . . and even when we can prove they're wrong. Nonetheless, customer research says that every unhappy customer tells at least ten other people about the problem they had at Taco Bell. Only a few will ever say that they had their problem solved satisfactorily. But they WILL come back!

At the end of one full day, these young crew members became Charm School graduates. We gave them framed certificates of graduation to take home, and we placed another framed copy on the wall of the restaurant near their work station. We also gave them a smiley-face pin that only they were permitted to wear on their uniforms. They also got an immediate raise. Money talks, sometimes almost as loudly as recognition!

Our Charm School program was in lock-step with the leader for customer relations at YUM! Brands. That would be Chairman of the Board David Novak. It was David who coined the phrase that governed us all: "Customer Maniacs." David is a walk-the-talk kind of guy, and I am confident that in a previous lifetime he was a professional cheerleader. David is fully comfortable in addressing several hundred buttoned-down Wall Street analysts and then finishing his remarks by leading them in a "YUM! cheer!"

As I wrote to David, one of our Area Coaches had asked crew members to write what Customer Mania meant to them. One of our team members who responded was Josh Shuck, who was nineteen years old and both mentally and physically challenged. He roller bladed to work each day from his government-assisted individual living apartment. He worked in the dining room, where he always showed a smile and a willingness to please. He would run to open the door for a customer and was once heard to reply to a guest that he did his job "not because of the money, but because I like it here." His response to the question about Customer Mania is reproduced below.

Josh's penmanship and grammar may have left a little to be desired, but he was gifted in so many other ways. He was also a gift to us as he reminded us of the opportunities we had in our business to provide situations and environments in which others could be productive members of our society and of our restaurant teams. Josh's story is a reminder that much of what we do has responsibilities that go beyond those of running our business. As our company and our people carved a niche that fit for Josh, so too not only did he fill that niche, but also he renewed our spirit and our faith in what was right about our business.


A Customer Maniac is someone who will come to work with a smile on his worst day. A person who will put the customer before himself.
A person who will run to help and not just take ther time. A person who will help anyone even when not on the Clock. will Take time to make sure customer is satisfied with their order. will give true opinions about what taste good, when asked.
You have a nice Day
And SMILE
Josh Shuck

David Novak had apparently heard of our little Charm School idea and asked me to share it with him when next I was in Louisville. On previous visits to his office, I had made a habit of bringing along a gift of a 21-year-old single-malt Scotch, so I was never certain whether David wanted to see me or the Scotch. At any rate, a few weeks later I was in Louisville and ventured up to his office with a bottle of Scotch in one hand and a Charm School graduation certificate for him in the other hand. I got his attention with the Scotch, and then told him a little about our program and added that his Customer Mania idea was the inspiration for our Charm School. With that, David stood up, walked over to me, gave me a full-court-press bear hug, and said that I was his inspiration. Needless to say, I was flattered by his comment, to say nothing of his rib-cracking bear hug. (David is a big man in every sense of the word, and his spirit is absolutely infectious.) He took the framed certificate with his name on it as an honorary graduate and found an empty space for it on his already well-cluttered office wall. It was another good day in KirTac Land.

But the central theme in all of this is about making a difference in people's lives. While we had some programs that we believe reached some of our people, there were always the opportunities in our

business to seize the moment as individual situations presented themselves. Countless times we made short-term loans to help managers make a house payment, or buy groceries, or cover the school needs of their children. We helped with lawyers' bills, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, counseling for abusive situations, and several child custody issues. We helped managers get married and paid for a couple of funerals. Wendy and I were asked to read scriptures, offer a eulogy, sing at their weddings, and in one instance, perform the duties of the father of the bride. Just the things one would do for anyone in their family.

Looking back, two special episodes will always be in my memory. The first has to do with one of our Florida managers who was in an abusive relationship and was raising her two grandchildren that her daughter had left with her. When we sold our Florida stores, Elaine and I had a long talk, and I told her we could always find a home for her in Indiana, if she ever chose to leave her situation.

A few weeks after the Florida sale was completed, Elaine called to let me know she had been beaten up for the last time and wanted to come to Indiana. It had to be a very clandestine operation because she was fearful he would kill her if he thought she was leaving him. The agreed-upon day came and the grandchildren went to school, just like every other morning. Elaine then left for work, salvaging only a few personal pictures, mementos, and keepsakes in the briefcase that she always took to work. She drove directly to the school, picked up the two children through prior arrangement with the building principal, and was headed north on I-75, in a rattle-trap car, with only the clothes on their backs.

She knew we would have a job for her, and that was all that mattered. She had gained her freedom and the freedom of her grandchildren. She already had several friends among our Indiana managers, the result of sharing several of our manager trips with them as we toured the world together. It was these other managers on whom I now leaned for help in making Elaine's transition and that of her grand-children as seamless as possible. It was our CFO who rented an apartment for Elaine, just down the street from her own residence. And it was several other of Elaine's Indiana friends who took it upon themselves to make Elaine one of their number. Within the time it took Elaine to drive from Florida to Indiana, her Hoosier buddies raised enough money and came up with enough stuff that Elaine's apartment was TOTALLY furnished, including a complete kitchen and laundry room, both children's bedrooms, and entire wardrobes for both kids, along with gift certificates for Elaine. The kitchen included complete sets of pots and pans, china, glassware, silverware, paper goods, full shelves of everything one could think of, and a refrigerator and freezer packed to overflowing. Remember, these are take-charge women and that's what they did.

Elaine called me from Kentucky on the third day of her trip. Her car had broken down once in transit, and she was about three hours away. All the buddies and office staff gathered at the apartment, did some party decorating, and had the margaritas ready to go. Elaine pulled up to the office and I had her follow me to her apartment. I called to let the others know we were a few minutes away. All was quiet when we arrived. I handed Elaine the keys to her new home; she opened the door with tears in her eyes, and then all hell broke loose. She was inundated with "SURPRISE!"; "Go girl!"; and "Have a drink!" She and both children were hugged and kissed to death, and it was one of those rare occasions when Wendy and I had little more to do but stand back and watch. . . . Elaine was home.

Elaine Faas and her two grandchildren, the day they arrived in Indiana to begin a new life.

Granddaughter Courtney, daughter Robin, and Elaine Faas in 2009. Sometimes things do get a lot better.

The second special story has to do with one of our district managers. Penny was one of our long-term employees; she was forty years of age, once married, now single, without children. Penny wanted to be a mom. As she does everything, Penny had done her homework quite thoroughly. She knew all about adoption, where to go, what it cost, what countries and agencies were the best to work with, and so forth. She decided to share her hopes and plans with us one day, knowing that I was adopted and that Wendy was pretty smart with this kind of thing.

As she progressed with her quest for motherhood, she discovered that to do this in the best possible and most timely manner was going to be costly and not easy to do alone. Wendy and I have long felt very positively about adoption and were delighted to have the opportunity to assist in Penny's project. More significantly, Wendy offered to be her traveling companion when it came time to finish the project. This gesture took on greater significance when it was determined that the addition to Penny's family would come from Russia. For a variety of reasons, Russia is one of the most desirable countries for adopting children, and some of the best agencies that assist in this type of enterprise are associated with the Russian system. This would prove to be particularly significant as our two babes in the woods were escorted through the maze of Russian bureaucracy and corruption, where every palm needed to be greased and every bureaucrat needed to have his or her ego massaged.

The day of departure arrived, and the ladies boarded their first plane, headed for Moscow. On their arrival in Moscow, they were met by their escort for the next two weeks, and the three of them boarded their next flight, heading north. Oh, did I fail to mention that this was in February? Well then, I should also mention that their flight north was w-a-a-a-a-a-y north; like 200 miles north of the Arctic Circle! This was not good planning. Furthermore, there was only one airline that flies up that way. It is the only airline in the world that I refuse to fly. Their safety record is one of the worst. Wendy and Penny had promised me they would not fly Aeroflot. Oh well, so much for marriage vows and employment contracts. These are women of their own minds, and they were on a QUEST! So be it. By the way, I discovered that it is quite difficult to micro-manage much of anything in the Arctic north of Russia. Especially when I am not there. These chicks were on their own.

So they boarded this antique, propeller-driven, corrugated-tin-covered piece of junk, sat down in their torn cloth-covered seats, and took off for the North Pole . . . almost. They landed a few hours later in the thriving metropolis of Apatity. At least they had plenty of runway. The Apatity Airport Authority simply snowplows, removing the snow from the ice, and voila: limitless runway of pure ice.

Now Apatity is on the road to Murmansk. In fact, it is on the only road to Murmansk. In fact, it is on the only road in that part of the world. If you wish to look it up in your World Atlas, you will find it just north of Kandalaksha, and just south of Monchegorsk. There, wasn't that helpful? They are met at the airport by their local escort, who arrives with hand extended . . . for money. He drives them to the local Budgetel, and they get unpacked, try on their snowshoes, and prepare to go to the orphanage to meet 18-month-old Pavel. The meeting, greeting, and bonding process goes on for three days, and all goes well. It is time to leave the orphanage and proceed with the next bureaucratic step in lovely downtown Murmansk.

We need a few words about the orphanage. It is, indeed, in the middle of nowhere. It is clean, neat and well organized. It is filled with about 100 lovely little boys and girls, ages 0 to 4. The caretakers are not many, but they are caring and sensitive people. Above all else, they want to be certain that their babies are going to a good home. The orphanage itself is rather Spartan. They have one toy room with about a dozen toys to be shared by the 100 children, so playing with toys is done in shifts of a dozen or so at a time. They also have a potty room. This is a stitch! The potty room is simply a

stark wood-floored room with no furniture except a dozen or so little sit-down potty jars. They are porcelainized metal containers with a handle. The modus operandi is that a group enters, they each pick their potty, and they sit. However, they don't sit still. Because they cannot leave the potty room until they have pottied, they fill the time by scooting around the room on their potties, sitting all the time, but with chubby little legs propelling and careening themselves around and about the room . . . and each other. It sounds like a great game of Dodgems, like at the county fair.

When the children leave the orphanage, they leave with nothing but their new adoptive parents – no food, no toys, no clothes, not even a cloth diaper. (The orphanage had only cloth diapers, and a limited supply of those.) Of course, the agency had advised Penny to bring clothes and diapers, so it was not a problem. And so it went. On to Murmansk! But, you may ask, why not back on the plane to Moscow and home? We've got the kid and all is well. Let's be on our way. Not so fast, say the Russians. We have bureaucrats yet to please and palms yet to grease. Ve vill start in Murmansk, YAH!

Murmansk is the regional capital and bureaucratic center for that part of Russia. There is no other reason for its existence. Oh, there used to be another reason. Murmansk is on a sheltered estuary of the Barents Sea, a part of the Arctic Ocean. The Arctic Ocean provided an under-the-surface route for the submarines of the USSR to take a shortcut across the Arctic Ocean to Alaska and the Pacific Ocean during all the years of the Cold War.

The Cold War is now history, but the Russian submarine fleet is not. It is mothballed in Murmansk. Now that's a lot of rusting metal for one seaport on the Barents Sea. But if you will recall, the Cold War ended because the Russians ran out of money. That included money to take care of their decaying submarines in Murmansk. Rusty water is bad enough, but the real problem is that the Russians had a huge fleet of submarines, and virtually all of those based at Murmansk were nuclear-powered. That means that each one of them has its own nuclear reactor.

Nuclear reactors don't do well without constant maintenance and supervision. Sort of like teenagers. Nuclear reactors that are not maintained and supervised tend to create leaks. What they leak is called radiation; a lot of it, from hundreds of reactors. As Joe Brand informed us before Penny and Wendy left the U.S., the natives of Murmansk have a certain "glow" about them. Their life spans are among the shortest of any city in the world. DO NOT spend more than a few days in Murmansk.

Welcome to Murmansk, home of Child Protective Services and the Board of Health, screening center for all baby kidnappers, and home of the meanest judge in the Great North of Russia. This is where the agency employed by Penny really earned their stripes. They were totally familiar with the system and all of the governmental agencies. They knew whom to pay off and to whom to bow. Penny was well taken care of and well prepared, even for the three-hour inquisition of Judge Olga. (Judge Judy was not available.) Olga was a tough lady. She wanted to know why Penny wanted a Russian baby and why did Penny think she was good enough to have a Russian baby. How old was Penny, why wasn't she married, why didn't she just have a baby out of wedlock, was she gay, was she a druggie, was she too old to raise a baby, did she have family to help her, did she have a job, how long, how much money, and so forth . . . for three hours. Fortunately, Penny had previously endured many of my three-hour manager meetings, so she was well prepared to handle this mundane stuff from Judge Olga.

Penny did well, and so after a couple of days, it was off to Moscow and home. Right? Wrong! Moscow is the bureaucratic and palm-greasing capital of the entire country. Certainly the Muscovites cannot be slighted. So once again, the highly competent agency people led our now tired and

exhausted new mother, old mother, and young baby through the maze that can only be described as Russian – and finally back onto a NON-Aeroflot plane for the first time in three weeks.

The return home was uneventful, except that this particular flight seems to be known as the "baby flight." The hostess shared with Penny and Wendy that this flight often has several newly-adopted babies on board, as evidenced by higher noise levels from several seats throughout the cabin. In brief conversations with some of the other new parents, it was learned that several had been there for two to three months, cutting through all the red tape. (Russians only have one color of tape.) Penny arrived home convinced that her agency was the best, and well worth the investment. She also shared with Wendy her thanks for all the help and companionship along the way. She did so in the most special of ways, one that Wendy and I will treasure always. Penny McDole told Wendy Kirby that Pavel's new name would be:

Nathaniel Pavel Kirby McDole

Nathaniel Pavel Kirby McDole, our "14th grandchild" and the son of our district manager with KirTac, Penny McDole.

Penny's journey was just one more example of how Wendy and I tried to make a difference in people's lives. Sometimes we know we have reached them, and at other times, we just don't know. I guess for that reason it is always nice to receive some affirmation of our efforts. I recently received a personal letter from Buffy Smith, one of our original crew members at our Inverness, Florida, restaurant. I had not seen Buffy for several years but stopped by to visit with her and some of our other Florida people this past spring. I received a follow-up note from her a few weeks later. It was one of those notes of affirmation. Part of her letter reads as follows: "I have always seen you as a father figure and in the short time that Steve (Buffy's husband) got to spend as part of the KirTac family, it left a lasting impression on him. We both admire and respect you very much. You don't find many Ned and Wendy Kirbys in this world any more who actually care about their people and try to impact their lives. I think anyone who has ever worked for you or got to know you guys would agree that you are one of a kind . . . ."

Buffy was a typical small-town teenager, wide-eyed and innocent, with a smile from ear to ear and an attitude to please. During our Florida years, she, like so many other youngsters who experienced their first job with us, stayed with us and worked her way up through the ranks from crew member to crew leader and into management, then up through shift manager and assistant restaurant manager, culminating her career as a restaurant general manager.

An RGM is a big job, with a single Taco Bell restaurant having a staff of 20-30 people, a payroll of $250,000 to $500,000, and sales levels as high as $2,000,000. In our company, RGMs were mostly female with a high school diploma; most were the primary breadwinner in their family. They were hard-working, smart beyond their formal education, with more common sense than many MBAs I have known, and tough when it was necessary. As a group, RGMs are the heart of any restaurant organization. We spent a lot of time with them and for them. We were, perhaps, more involved in their lives than was necessary, but we truly regarded them as our extended family. Did that create problems at times? You bet. But so what? These were young people who in many cases had no role models, little family support, and spouses who, all too often, might just as well have been absent (as many of them were). In a nutshell, they were the ones who made the most out of the least. So Wendy and I assumed the role of adjunct problem solvers for many of them. Much of this attitude on our part ultimately found its way down through all levels of our management team, and even into the hundreds of young people who staffed our restaurants at any given point in time.

Did we make a difference in some lives? I hope so. I think so. While I do not miss the daily aspects of running a business terribly much, I do miss the people. I miss the youth and the vigor that our several hundred young people brought to us daily. The excitement, the challenges, the frustrations, the sad moments, the successes, the recognitions – it all made for a very full and fulfilling quarter of a century.

I like to think that Wendy and I were the right people for the right job at the right time. Could others have done it better? Of course – at least in some ways. But nobody would have worked harder at it or loved it more than we did. When we finally made the decision to retire, like most such decisions, it was done with mixed emotions, many of which still exist. I don't second-guess the decision. It was time. I do miss some of what we left behind. Above all else, I miss the people – those at KirTac, at Taco Bell and KFC, and at YUM! Brands, fellow franchisees, purveyors of goods and services, accountants, and yes, even lawyers. They were business associates who became friends. They were people I believed in and trusted. I relied upon their counsel, their advice, and their products. Over the years, we did some sorting and selecting, and finished by being surrounded with the best of the best. If we did one thing right, it was that we made it all about people.

ENDING AND BEGINNING

While I mentioned that KirTac was a quarter century of fulfillment, I really didn't grasp the significance of that until it was time to sell. Our good friends and primary lenders at Bank of America suggested that we should be represented by a broker and made a couple of recommendations. One was in-house and the other was an independent, a former associate of theirs at B of A. We also knew her from those earlier days. We interviewed both parties and chose Amy and her associates at Brookwood. Amy was knowledgeable in our part of the market and experienced in doing deals, including some previous Taco Bell deals. I happened to know the franchisees involved and called them. Amy got high marks from them as well.

We basically turned all of our data over to her and she ran with it. She told us up front that she would send out about a hundred notices and that she anticipated that we would get about twenty to thirty responses. From those we should get about a dozen offers. We would then sort through those, narrow it down to a final three, and choose the best fit. Well, up front I told Amy that I did not want to sell to anyone who had become a major player in the A.O. (Asset Optimization) deals in purchasing stores from Taco Bell. With a couple of exceptions, I viewed these people as already highly leveraged and not a good fit for our people. This eliminated fifteen or twenty from her mailing list, probably to her chagrin.

Then things began to happen. She mailed out about 85 notices, and in fairly short order she had over fifty requests for information. I asked her if we were getting a lot of tire-kickers, and she said she thought it was about average. What happened next was not average. From the group who received the brochures, we received 31 solid bids, 29 of which were above the level we had determined we would be willing to accept. I again asked Amy what was going on. She answered that she had wondered the same thing and had made several phone calls. She had learned that, for better or worse (mostly better), we were well known and highly regarded within the franchise community and that one of the primary assets of KirTac was its people. Bingo!

Needless to say, Amy had not anticipated having to work her way through 31 firm bids, but work she did. She finally gave up trying to narrow it to three finalists. We got it narrowed to a dozen, and we ultimately spent over a week (not the two days she had planned) meeting with potential buyers and their key people, escorting them through our markets, and touring our units. Amy did all the follow-through with each of the final nine, sharing information with me on a daily basis. She repeatedly commented on how highly thought of we were and how much easier that made her job. I offered to pay her less, but she reminded me that she was dealing with a lot more people than she had planned. "Bad planning?" I asked. She responded with something that finished with ". . . where the sun don't shine." (Uh, we had a fairly strong and communicative relationship by that time.)

The ultimate purchaser was a franchise organization based in Fort Smith, Arkansas. They were old friends going back over two decades. They had been acquired the previous year by a Boston-based private equity fund. Thus we were dealing simultaneously, at the same table, with the good ole boys from Fort Smith and the hot-shot financiers from Boston. Time for some good lawyering, right? Well, we had good lawyers, right here in our own backyard. We were up against the Chicago office of the world-wide firm of Kirkland and Ellis – tough cookies with a reputation to match. Our friends at Bingham and McHale more than held their own with the big boys. After one particular conference call, where the locals sort of ate the lunch of the Chicago bunch, I immediately called our guys to

congratulate them on a superior negotiating session. In all humility, Jeremy Hill responded that he thought they were being a little easy on us because their client wanted to do the deal. Well, burst my bubble. I rely a lot on what Jeremy has to say, but this time I just repeated that, in my judgment, "You ate their lunch! That's what I believe and I'm not changing my mind." (After all . . . I was the client!)

It was a nice way to go out, with friends, family, co-workers, advisors, and counselors all doing their best for us. And it was nice to sell to friends with whom we felt comfortable – nice for ourselves, and for the several hundred young people we had now entrusted to them.

A treasured photo of Ned and Wendy with the founder of Taco Bell, Glen Bell.
If you have guessed by the ugly shirts that we are in Hawaii, you are correct.

NED SEZ

During the twenty-four years of KirTac, Inc., our Taco Bell and KFC franchise company, we implemented a number of communication vehicles with our several hundred staff members. They included the standard memos, meetings and company-wide rallies, as well as quarterly newsletters and a bi-weekly bulletin entitled "Ned Sez."

"Ned Sez" existed for several years, finishing with our final payroll. It was nearly always a single page, since we knew that few souls are saved after the first page of anything. Its contents were pretty much whatever moved my spirit that week. It included pure business items such as information related to a new product rollout, new marketing programs, human resource policies, and so forth. It also served as a low-level MBA course, covering such items as definitions of success, implementation of leadership, and customer relations. Some of the time we printed material from other sources regarding various motivational ideas and quotations, humor in the workplace, and just plain silly stuff.

In 2004, I sent a memo to all of our restaurant management teams, explaining the purpose of "Ned Sez."

Let me share with you some of the background of why we write "Ned Sez" and what we hope to accomplish through its distribution to all of our restaurant staff members.

Remember that nearly all of our communications to our staff people are just about the business. There is so much more – about you, and us, and this company, and life. We want to communicate with all who are part of our company family and occasionally talk about these other things. It is important to me that those who work for us know that this company has a heart, and a soul, and maybe even a brain.

We want to share good jokes and funny stories with them. We also want them to know what we believe in, what we stand for, and what our expectations are of them. We occasionally want to challenge them intellectually, to make them think a little, if only as a reminder that everyone has a brain and some need to be used a little more.

We want their job to be more than just a paycheck. It should be fun, fulfilling, and a means for betterment for those who may wish to make it a career. "Ned Sez" is about the only way we have to communicate all of these things on a regular basis to the several hundred people who are part of this company.

Through it all, there were times when the subject was dictated by world events, inspirational people, and U.S. history and patriotism. I have sorted through the couple of hundred issues and selected a handful to reprint here, largely those dealing with inspiring people and history and patriotism.

Many years ago, long before 9/11, we decided that our company would set aside the period (approximately six weeks) from Memorial Day to the Fourth of July to celebrate as "Patriotic Month." During that six-week period we provided a small American flag lapel pin for each of our employees to wear on their uniforms. We also invited our customers to join with us; we placed on our service counter a foot-high statue that included a replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall with an army soldier, dressed in combat fatigues, kneeling at the foot of the wall. This kneeling soldier/wall statue was complemented by a stack of flyers, a different one for each week of the six-week celebration. After 9/11, the soldier stature was replaced with another statue, a replica of the raising of the American flag by the three New York City firemen at Ground Zero.

The flyers were free to our customers for the taking, and each of the six flyers included a portion of a famous speech made by an American patriot. The six speakers of the immortal quotations included Patrick Henry, Daniel Webster, President Abraham Lincoln, Judge Learned Hand, General Douglas MacArthur, and President John F. Kennedy. The short passages chosen from each speech are both poignant and powerful to this day. They follow this introduction, in order that you may join me in a brief journey through American history and be reminded once again why America is the "land of the free and the home of the brave."

Following the quotations are several additional issues of "Ned Sez," not necessarily in the order in which they were written. The first one in the patriotic series was written on September 11, 2001, and reflects my feelings as they were on that day. The remaining four in that series were all written after 9/11 and tend to reflect the course of events through these turbulent years, and to a lesser extent, the sometimes direct or indirect impact felt by our company's family. The last in the series, "Flanders Fields," is more a reflection, perhaps a reminder, that regardless of the generation, or the conflict, or the country of origin, or its time in history, there is a common heritage shared by those who are asked by their country to bear arms. Following this series are four more issues of "Ned Sez" dealing with leaders who have had great influence on our times. The last "Ned Sez" rounds out the series.

This is the first in a series of six weekly quotations of famous Americans. All six are patriotic in content and are part of our company's Annual Recognition of American veterans and servicemen and women. Many have fought on foreign soils, some making the ultimate sacrifice, in order that we may continue to live in the Land of the Free. Please pause for a moment and place them in your thoughts and prayers.

On March 23, 1775, a 38 year old self-taught lawyer, by the name of Patrick Henry, rose to speak in St. John's Church in Richmond, Virginia. The gathering was of 122 delegates of the then British Colony. It is said that he spoke without notes, and that his speech began in a quiet smolder and ended ablaze with passion. The following quotation is the final passage of this now-famous patriotic oration.

"There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight battles for us. The battle is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. Besides, we have no election. If we were base enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat but in submission and slavery! Our chains are forged. Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston. The war is inevitable — and let it come! I repeat, let it come.

It is in vain to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, 'Peace! Peace!' — but there is no peace. The war is actually begun. The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, GIVE ME LIBERTY, OR GIVE ME DEATH!"

KirTac, Inc., A Franchisee of Taco Bell Corp. and KFC Corp.
111 Carey Dr., Noblesville, IN 46060

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Daniel Webster was a member of the House of Representatives from Massachusetts when he was asked to speak at the laying of the cornerstone of the Monument on Bunker Hill in Boston. It was June 17, 1825, several decades after the Revolutionary War. As he spoke, one could almost hear again the "Shot heard round the world." Listen again, as Representative Daniel Webster finishes his remarks.

> "And let the sacred obligations which have devolved on this generation and on us sink deep into our hearts. Those are daily dropping from among us who established our liberty and our government. The great trust now descends to new hands. Let us apply ourselves to that which is presented to us as our appropriate object. We can win no laurels in a war for independence. Earlier and worthier hands have gathered them all. Nor are there places for us by the side of Solon, and Alfred, and other founders of states. Our fathers have filled them. But there remains to us a great duty of defense and preservation; and there is opened to us also a noble pursuit to which the spirit of the times strongly invites us.
>
> Let our object be our country, our whole country, and nothing but our country. And by the blessing of God may that country itself become a vast and splendid monument, not of oppression and terror, but of wisdom, of peace, and of liberty, upon which the world may gaze with admiration, forever."

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President Abraham Lincoln had made the journey to participate in the dedication of a military cemetery outside this small eastern Pennsylvania town. The date is November 19, 1863: President Lincoln is now at the podium, so step back in time with us as we read once again, those famous 266 words which begin:

> "Four score and seven years ago...
>
> our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.
>
> Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.
>
> But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate — we cannot consecrate — we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us — that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion — that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain — that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom — and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

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It was towards the end of World War II, that Judge Learned Hand spoke in New York City's Central Park. The occasion was an "I Am an American Day" ceremony. Judge Learned Hand is best known to any lawyer because of his over 2000 judicial decisions, many of which have found their way into law school texts. But on May 20, 1945, Judge Hand delivered a thoughtful credo that profoundly moved his audience. His topic: "The Spirit of Liberty" He closed with these words.

> "What then is the spirit of liberty? I cannot define it; I can only tell you my own faith. The spirit of liberty is the spirit which is not too sure that it is right; the spirit of liberty is the spirit which seeks to understand the minds of other men and women; the spirit of liberty is the spirit which weighs their interests alongside its own without bias; the spirit of liberty remembers that not even a sparrow falls to earth unheeded; the spirit of liberty is the spirit of him who, near two thousand years ago, taught mankind that lesson it has never learned, but never quite forgotten — that there may be a kingdom where the least shall be heard and considered side by side with the greatest. And now in that spirit, that spirit of an America which has never been, and which may never be — nay, which never will be except as the conscience and courage of Americans create it — yet in the spirit of that America which lies hidden in some form in the aspirations of us all; in the spirit of that America for which our young men are at this moment fighting and dying; in that spirit of liberty and of America so prosperous and safe, and contented, we shall have failed to grasp its meaning, and shall have been truant to its promise, except as we strive to make it a signal, a beacon, a standard, to which the best hopes of mankind will ever turn? In confidence that you share that belief, I now ask you to raise your hands and repeat with me: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands — one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

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Arguably America's most powerful General of the 20th Century, General Douglas MacArthur was also a man of powerful words. On May 12, 1962, he spoke to the Corps of Cadets on his final visit to West Point. He spoke as a soldier of one era to the future leaders of another. As he reminded the Corps of the values that undergird the profession of arms, his closing theme was the wording of the Academy's Coat of Arms: "Duty, Honor, Country."

> "The long gray line has never failed us. Were you to do so, a million ghosts in olive drab, in brown khaki, in blue and gray, would rise from their white crosses, thundering those magic words: duty, honor, country. This does not mean that you are warmongers. On the contrary, the soldier above all other people prays for peace, for he must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war. But always in our ears ring the ominous words of Plato, that wisest of philosophers: 'Only the dead have seen the end of war."
>
> The shadows are lengthening for me. The twilight is here. My days of old have vanished — tone and tints. They have gone glimmering through the dreams of things that were. Their memory is one of wondrous beauty, watered by tears and coaxed and caressed by the smiles of yesterday. I listen, then, but with a thirsty ear, for the witching melody of faint bugles blowing reveille, of far drums beating the long roll. In my dreams I hear again the crash of guns, the rattle of musketry, the strange, mournful mutter of the battlefield. But in the evening of my memory I come back to West Point. Always there echoes and re-echoes: duty, honor, country.
>
> Today marks my final roll call with you. But I want you to know that when I cross the river, my last conscious thoughts will be of the corps, and the corps, and the corps. I bid you farewell."

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Our final quotation in this series is from the Inaugural speech of the first United States President born in the 20th Century. President John F. Kennedy was to take up the torch for a new generation. For many of us it was OUR generation. It was a time of the "Cold War," as evidenced by his remarks of "Let every nation know ... that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty." Kennedy closed his speech with a plea to the citizenry, an appeal which still rings true today.

> "In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course. Since this country was founded, each generation of Americans has been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty. The graves of young Americans who answered the call to service surround the globe. Now the trumpet summons us again — not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need — not as a call to battle, though embattled we are — but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, 'rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation' — a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself.
>
> Can we forge against these enemies a grand and global alliance, North and South, East and West, that can assure a more fruitful life for all mankind? Will you join in that historic effort? In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility — I welcome it. I do not believe that any of us would exchange places with any other people or any other generation. The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavor will light our country and all who serve it — and the glow from that fire can truly light the world.
>
> And so my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

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NED SEZ

TO THE NEXT GENERATION

September 11, 2001

For the vast majority of our staff, you have lived in and enjoyed a quarter century of peace and prosperity unparalleled in the history of mankind. For most of you, your life has been spent in the greatest country on the face of the earth.

It is now time for us all to pause and remember that this great experiment of ours, this democracy of governance, is still in its infancy. The United States of America is barely 200 years old, a mere blip on the screen of the history of mankind. As such, it is quite fragile and still requires the nurturing of a mother, the protection of a father, and the allegiance of us all. It is, after all, a form of governance still not understood or appreciated by much of the world. Some are even threatened by our many freedoms and feel the need to attack those things that we believe in and stand for.

And so this is a time of opportunity. It is a call for a new generation, your generation, to step forward and walk in the footsteps and along the pathways of those who have preceded you. From Bunker Hill to the Argonne Forest, to Iwo Jima, to the 38th parallel, to the Ho Chi Minh Trail, previous generations have answered the call of "Duty, Honor, Country." None have failed us. Nor will your generation. You will soon have the same opportunities as those who have gone before you to demonstrate your commitment and loyalty to this great land of ours. It will be your generation who will show the way. From among your number will be those who will provide leadership and support, and some who may have to make the ultimate sacrifice.

Make no mistake about it, our great experiment of democracy will soon be challenged as never before. The challenge will be demonstrative of this new century, full of surprises, new technology, new rules of engagement, creative alliances, and so much more that has yet to evolve. You will meet and conquer these challenges, as we have done before. You will be supported and watched over by those who have preceded you, and you will be admired and honored by those generations yet to come.

As you think and dream of the future – your future and the future of your country – many thoughts will come to your mind. I hope that among those thoughts, you will think of the words, now so appropriate, that were spoken by President John F. Kennedy in his inaugural address:

"Ask not what your country can do for you:
ask what you can do for your country."

NED SEZ

LEANTHONY DANIELS

January 14, 2002

To all the KirTac family;

Today is a poignant day for me and many others in our KirTac family. It is particularly so for our management staff and team at our Logansport Taco Bell restaurant. It is today than one among us has left our company to serve in a greater cause.

Logansport Restaurant Manager LeAnthony Daniels received his call to active duty this past Saturday and left early this morning with his unit. LeAnthony is a corporal in the United States Army and serves in a communications unit. His ultimate destination is unknown to him at the moment, but I suspect that some basic knowledge of an Arabic language would be useful.

LeAnthony has traded his manager's uniform for the sand-colored camouflage fatigues of those on active duty. He has swapped his Taco Bell ball cap for a steel helmet. (Of course, he has always been a little hard-headed.) He has always said "Yes sir," and "Yes ma'am," but starting today, it will be in response to his new first sergeant, not Penny, and his new company commander, not Cathy.

LeAnthony is among the best there is to offer, whether from our company, our state, or our nation. He will represent us well, and he will do so with a sense of pride and great conviction. He is from a new generation. It is your generation. But he represents us all: all generations, all genders, all creeds, and all colors. He represents not only Americans, but all those around the world who believe in liberty and justice.

We too, have a job. Just as LeAnthony represents all of us, all of us need to support him. This is a time when each of us, individually and collectively, can do our part on his behalf. Whether it is a note, or a card, or a little "care package" of goodies from a group at one of our stores, or a phone call or a note for his wife Julie in Kokomo, we all have an opportunity to play a role. He is, after all, one of us. Let's be certain that he remembers his KirTac family.

It was General McArthur, in his farewell address to the Corps of Cadets at West Point, who spoke so eloquently of "Duty, Honor, and Country." And nearly two decades later, it was President John F. Kennedy, in his inaugural address, who challenged us all with those immortal words: "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." LeAnthony is responding to both, on behalf of us all. It is therefore a time for us to be grateful and proud as we pray for his safe return. As I close this note, please pause for a moment and join with me in a final thought:

God speed, LeAnthony Daniels.

NED SEZ

LET FREEDOM RING

It was just a couple weeks ago that we removed from your store the small statues memorializing Ground Zero in New York. In thinking about our annual recognition of the many events and people whom we honor during our Patriotic Month, I tried to condense my thoughts to a single word. My mind wandered forward and back, to and fro, and always came back to the same thought. It's all about FREEDOM: freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and so forth, but always freedom.

Our young nation has truly led the quest for freedom since we gained our sovereignty a little over two hundred years ago. Since the Revolutionary War, and particularly during the past sixty years or so, the world has repeatedly looked to the United States to protect the downtrodden, free the oppressed, and fight for the just cause. Tens of thousands of Americans have made the ultimate sacrifice, often to protect the lives and rights of those in far off lands. That quest for freedom rings as true today as ever before.

With each challenge, leadership has emerged to show us the way. It seems as though such events often bring the best out in those burdened with the responsibility to lead. So it is that our presidents, our leaders in each of the major challenges over this past half century, have always seemed to find the right words to provide us the inspiration and desire to meet whatever challenge has confronted us.

Second World War: President Roosevelt spoke in 1941 and said, "In the truest sense freedom cannot be bestowed, it must be achieved."

Korean War: President Eisenhower spoke in 1953 and stated, "We must be ready to dare all for our country. For history does not long entrust the care of freedom to the weak or the timid."

The Cold War: President Kennedy spoke these words at his inauguration in 1961: "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of freedom."

Vietnam War: President Lyndon Johnson in 1967 said, "The test before us as a people is not whether our commitments match our will and courage, but whether we have the will and the courage to match our commitments."

The War against Terror: President George Bush spoke shortly after 9/11 and said, "We will not waver; we will not tire; we will not falter; and we will not fail. Peace and freedom will prevail."

The ancient philosopher Plato spoke centuries ago, and his wisdom still holds true today. His words were simple yet eloquent: "Only the dead have seen the end of war." And so it is: the world does not seem to learn from its own history, but the cause of justice and freedom will continue to ring for peoples throughout the world, and America will continue to provide both the example and the leadership for all of humanity.

NED SEZ

MEMORIAL DAY

Memorial Day, 2003

What did you do today? Was today just another holiday? Was it a chance to get together with friends and family, spend some time visiting, or fishing, or cooking on the grill? Hopefully, it was something more than just another day at work.

Like so many of our holidays, Memorial Day is founded on a tradition of great significance, and it is uniquely American. It began in 1868 and was widely known as Decoration Day. Its purpose was for loved ones to pause and remember those who had fallen in the Civil War. The remembrance often included visiting the grave site and decorating the site with flowers and other appropriate remembrances.

There are many such graves throughout this great land. They are often part of a military section of small town cemeteries or part of the many military cemeteries here and abroad. Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C., is the largest in this country, with tens of thousands of white granite headstones, standing at attention, in perfect lines, row after row.

Those beneath the headstones come from every corner of our nation and from every walk of life. They represent every creed, color, and station in life known to mankind. They have one thing in common. They are all patriots. They all served their nation, protecting a way of life known only to free men and women.

President Franklin Roosevelt once said, "Freedom cannot be bestowed, it must be achieved." Today, we have thousands of our young people stationed throughout our country and around the world, providing us security and protecting us from those who would challenge our belief in liberty and justice. In President Bush's remarks today at Arlington Cemetery, he told a brief story of a wife who lost her husband in Iraq. Her words were quite simple and yet eloquent enough for our President to quote:

> "There's good and evil in the world. That's just what it is. My husband was on the good side."

If you didn't pause today to remember that we are on the good side, it's never too late. Some day soon, take a little time from your day. Visit a military grave site. Decorate it with an American flag. Share the experience with someone else, so that they will know what is important and meaningful to you.

Lest we forget.

NED SEZ

IN FLANDERS FIELDS

Flanders is an area in the western part of Belgium. It was in 1915 that one fierce battle was fought in the area, near the Belgium community of Ypres. (Battles between the Allies and the Germans were fought near Ypres five different times during the First World War. Canadian forces fought in the second and third of these; United States forces fought in the fifth battle.) A Canadian army surgeon was present during the second battle (in 1915) and tended to numerous injured and dying soldiers. Several days after the fighting had ended, Major John McCrae had a moment to relax and reflect upon his thoughts and feelings during what he called his "seventeen days of Hell."

The result was a poem which serves to this day as a lasting legacy to the battle waged in the fields of Flanders. It is a reminder to us all that while mankind will always pursue liberty and freedom, the costs are high and the sacrifices great.

There is an American cemetery today, located in the Flanders region, near the town of Waregem. It is modest in size, containing just six acres. It includes 368 graves, and the chapel on its grounds lists an additional 43 names of Americans missing in action. The location of the cemetery is part of the flat and soggy fields of Flanders, fields that have been soaked in the blood of warriors for centuries. The cemetery is named after Major John McCrea's poem. Red poppies grew profusely in the disturbed earth of the battlefields and cemeteries in this area of Belgium, and the red poppy became a symbol of sacrifice and remembering on Remembrance Day, the British and Commonwealth holiday corresponding to our Veteran's Day, November 11. A generation ago, it was common in this country to see red crepe-paper poppies being sold on the streets on November 11.

"Flanders Fields" is a poem written by a Canadian, used to memorialize an American cemetery, near the small Belgian community of Ypres. It ends with the lines, "If ye break faith with us who die / We shall not sleep, though poppies grow / In Flanders fields."

If you would like to read the complete poem, it can be found on numerous websites on the Internet, including the following:
http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/flanders.htm http://en.
http://www.abmc.gov/cemeteries/cemeteries/ff_pict.pdf
wikipedia.org/wiki/In_Flander%27s_Fields

NED SEZ

I REMEMBER ROSA PARKS

When I was a teenager, there was a small news story out of Montgomery, Alabama, about a black woman and a bus seat. It seems as though her bus was full and she was told to give up her seat to a white man. She refused to do so. She was subsequently arrested and booked, resulting in the black population of Montgomery boycotting the local bus system for 13 months. During that period of time, an even younger (age 26) black preacher from Montgomery, whose name was Martin Luther King, Jr., was asked to lead the Montgomery Improvement Association, an organization dedicated to the civil rights movement in Montgomery. Dr. King was the full time pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, but he reluctantly agreed to lead the local association. As they say, the rest is history.

Rosa Parks died yesterday at the age of 92, but her small act of defiance from over fifty years ago will sustain her legacy forever. I am certain that no one at that time had any inkling that this arrest for a minor violation of existing segregation laws, including a $10 fine, would go down in history. It didn't even make the evening news of Walter Cronkite at CBS nor Huntley and Brinkley at NBC. And it certainly didn't register with an Urbana, Ohio teenager who was thinking more about the next football game or an upcoming English exam.

Yet it was this small act, insignificant at the time but full of significance today, that dramatically changed the social structure of our country and through us has impacted societies around the world. Whether in the Russian territory of Chechnya, or the numerous conflicts in Central Africa, or in the Middle East – they all strive for that which we often take for granted: freedom. Freedom comes in a variety of packages – freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from oppression by tyrants, and freedom from the laws of segregation.

I wonder if Rosa Parks was ever able to fully comprehend the impact she had, not only upon the laws and struggles that flowed from her single act of defiance in Montgomery, but indeed upon the similar struggles that continue to this day around the world. Or did she continue to view her act as one of just doing what she knew was right in her heart, and in her mind, and at that moment, because . . . its time had come. I wonder . . . .

Rosa Parks, with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in the background. This USIA photo, courtesy of Wikipedia Commons, dates from circa 1955, the year of the momentous bus ride. Ms. Park's reason for refusing to give up her seat? Her feet hurt after a long day of work.

NED SEZ

WOODY HAYES AND A FRIEND NAMED TOM

It was in the Fall of 1959, on a warm and sunny Saturday afternoon at Ohio Stadium. Half-time was approaching and Coach Hayes was an unhappy man. The Ohio State offense was not moving the ball, and the score was 14-7 in favor of Duke University. So Woody decided to fix things. At half-time, he took his starting halfback, Tom Matte, grabbed a center, and the three of them walked out to the practice field outside the open south end of Ohio Stadium. To the bemusement of thousands of spectators in the stadium, Woody proceeded to convert Tom into a quarterback. At the start of the second half, Matte became the starting quarterback. He engineered a 67-yard touchdown drive to tie the game and finished the season as OSU's quarterback.

Tom was a fraternity brother at Ohio State, and we still maintain our friendship. When he graduated from OSU, he went on to play professional football for the Baltimore Colts under another coaching legend by the name of Don Shula. It was with the Colts that Tom once again benefitted from his experience of playing for not just one but two coaching legends. In 1965, the Colts had made the playoffs only to lose both of their quarterbacks, John Unitas and Gary Cuozzo, to injuries. Sure enough, with the first playoff game approaching, Coach Hayes called Coach Shula to let him know that Tom could do the quarterback job. Shula listened, agreed, and Tom was the new quarterback. Matte led the Colts to a win over the L.A. Rams, lost to the Packers in the Super Bowl (in overtime on a disputed field goal), and won the Playoff Bowl by running all over Dallas.

While Tom and Woody often did not agree on things while at Ohio State, it was Woody who honored Tom after his Super Bowl performance with a special recognition at the Ohio High Schools Annual Coaches Clinic. Woody quoted Ralph Waldo Emerson, saying, "A man prepares a long time for one moment of greatness." He then presented Tom with the Association's "Moment of Greatness Award." On a TV interview show in Columbus, Ohio, later that same weekend, it was Tom Matte who said the following: "Woody and I didn't see eye to eye when I was playing for him, but he had the biggest influence on me of anybody in my life. He made a man of me. He's got to be one of the great all-time coaches. He's not only interested in helping you become a better football player, but in your becoming a better man. It takes a long time for a guy to figure that out, but I did. That Woody! He's one heck of a man!"

And so it is that a bronze bust of Woody Hayes occupies a prominent place in the home office of KirTac, and Tom Matte occupies a prominent place in my rolodex. They are both, in their own way, what the game is all about . . . the game of football and the game of life.

NED SEZ

RONALD REAGAN

1911-2004

He was known by several names, including "Dutch" and "The Gipper." His wife Nancy often referred to him as "My Ronnie." For the vast majority of us, he was "Mr. President."

The nation's 40th President gave spirit and renewed confidence to a nation and its people. He was a cheerleader and optimist beyond all expectations. He believed in this country and its people and demonstrated that faith repeatedly. What was surprising was that he was so much more. This small-town boy from Illinois surprised many with his service to our country during his two terms as President of the United States.

His predecessors had brought us into a full-blown recession, including 21% interest rates. We were still in the midst of the Cold War, with no end in sight. Enter the "Gipper" (a name derived from a movie about famed Notre Dame Coach Knute Rockne and his All-American halfback, George Gipp. Reagan played the part of Gipp.) President Reagan came up with an immediate solution to the recession . . . he lowered taxes! And it worked. He also spent time dealing with the problems of the world, foremost of those being the Cold War. It was through his leadership and personal stature among the world's leaders that an end was brought to the basic conflict between the world's democracies and the world's Communist states. No words spoken by him during his Presidency were more symbolic than his address at the Berlin Wall, when he stated, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall." Not only did the wall come down, largely due to the economic squeeze put on the USSR by the western world, but the "evil empire" of the Soviet Union disintegrated.

President Reagan was more than a politician. In fact, he wasn't a very good politician. He simply was not concerned about being politically correct. What you saw was what you got. What we got was a decent human being, one who brought honesty and integrity to the most powerful office in the world. He was cordial and honest, and he treated everyone the same. Status was not a big deal with him. In fact, he was always more comfortable at his California ranch than at the White House. But my, how he respected the job and loved the country for which he toiled. When asked why he always wore a jacket and tie when he was working in the Oval Office, he responded that it would be disrespectful not to do so. How refreshing.

He was also known as the Great Communicator, and for good reason. He worked hard at that part of his job. He delivered his messages with expertise, not only because of his training as an actor, but because they were his words. He wrote many of his speeches himself, by hand, and practiced them over and over. Among those words he usually included some humor, sometimes planned and other times not planned. His humor spilled over into much of his daily life. The assassination attempt on his life was the classic example of his indomitable wit. When his wife Nancy arrived at the hospital emergency room, she immediately asked her husband what happened. The President, who had been hit by one of the six shots fired, replied, "Honey, I guess I forgot to

duck." A few minutes later, as he was wheeled into the surgery room, he glanced up at the circle of doctors and nurses and stated, "I hope you are all Republicans."

If a man is measured by his persona, his constant smile said it all. If one is measured by his contribution to mankind, his worldwide impact and love for his country were unequalled. If one is measured by his basic values and philosophies, then here was the least complicated of men. He simply loved his country and its people, and that love was returned in kind. He had one close friend and married her. He carried our flag and waved it proudly, and frequently reminded a nation that everything was fine and could only get better. All we had to do was believe. He did all of this with a constant smile and a twinkle in his eye.

If there is a heaven, it has two new twinkling stars tonight. They are the eyes of one who still looks over us, cares for us, nurtures us, and always says to us, "God Bless America."

NED SEZ

POPE JOHN PAUL II

The world has lost a leader, a man of great impact and significance during the last half of the 20th century. He was a strong man, strong of will and of opinion. He was a compassionate man, filled with love and understanding.

John Paul II will leave his mark as a religious leader who was not afraid to walk among the leaders of the world, including presidents, prime ministers, and dictators. He was a voice of moderation and good will as he strove to influence other leaders in the direction of simply doing what he believed to be the right thing.

In all of his efforts, Pope John Paul II was always committed to his Roman Catholic faith. He was, above all, a man of faith. He was also a man of conviction. His influence was seldom more obvious than when he met with our own American presidents. I remember vividly two such occasions. The first was when he provided great moral persuasion during the days when President Reagan was doing his best to convince Russian Prime Minister Gorbachev to "bring down this wall." And that day did come. John Paul II was also not bashful about chiding the second President Bush regarding the invasion of Iraq.

Pope John Paul II, more than any other leader, traveled the world in pursuit of the freedom and dignity of his fellow man. He visited 129 countries during his papacy to visit with the faithful and the faithless. This son of Poland, the former Cardinal of Krakow, led the world in recognizing the deceptive nature of communism. His support of his native land's quest for freedom and his alignment with Polish leader Lech Wałęsa and the Polish trade union federation Solidarność (Solidarity), the first such organization in the communist bloc not controlled by the Communist Party, directly contributed to the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe and much of the rest of the world. He was a world activist, but always within the concept of his faith and beliefs.

Wendy and I were privileged to see Pope John Paul II on two separate occasions, both times accompanied by KirTac restaurant managers. I will never forget either occasion. The first was on our initial KirTac trip to Rome. We had managed to arrange for tickets at the Vatican for an audience with the Pope. It was an audience attended by a few hundred, but it could just as well have been only the twenty of us from Indiana. We were ushered into one of the Vatican's chapels, there to wait for the arrival of His Holiness. We had all been standing and fidgeting for several minutes when a hush started to fall over the gathering. We were towards the back of the chapel, but make no mistake about it, we knew the instant that the Pope entered the room. Without exception, every single person in the room, those of faith and those not of faith, seemed to all catch their breath at once. It was as though the air had left the room. Each of us in our own way knew that this was a special moment. We knew that we were in the presence of a holy person. It was unlike any other moment that Wendy or I have ever experienced in our lives.

The second occasion for us to see the Pope was on our last KirTac manager trip to Rome, which happened to fall on a Palm Sunday. Because it was a cold and rainy day, the traditional Palm Sunday procession through St. Peter's Square was cancelled. Nonetheless, we stood for some time with tens of thousands of others, hoping for an appearance by the Pope, but nothing seemed to be happening. We were thinking and talking about leaving

when a nearby priest overheard our conversation. He suggested that we wait just a few more minutes. He seemed to have some insider information, perhaps reserved for priests, and he shared with us that he thought the Pope would appear at one of the windows of the papal apartments above St. Peter's Square. Sure enough, as though it were by divine intervention, our faith in the priest's judgment enabled us to see and be blessed again by Pope John Paul II. It was another special moment shared by our small group from Indiana.

John Paul II, the 264th Pope of the Roman Catholic church, has left us at the age of 84. Not only did he provide guidance for his flock, but he also served as a shepherd for mankind. His successor will be elected by the College of Cardinals from their gathering place in the Sistine Chapel. This is the same room that our manager group has been privileged to stroll through twice before. It is where we have looked upward at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, at the greatest work of art by one of mankind's greatest artists, Michelangelo.

Soon, the world will have a new Pope. May we hope and pray that this new Pope will be as positive an influence on the 21st century as was John Paul II on the 20th century. Pope John Paul II was a good man . . . a man of God . . . and he made the world a better place to live for us all.

THE LAST "NED SEZ"

I once had a choir director who taught us how to reach perfection through the use of repetition. He would say many times during each rehearsal, "Okay now, just one more time from the top." And so I write to you just one more time, from the top.

Those of you who have been with us for several years know that our "Ned Sez" letters have covered the gamut from fun to serious, pure business to nothing about business, and have touched on a variety of values, ethics, morals, pride, motivation, and many other topics that make the world go around – your world and mine.

It is our hope that everyone has gained some knowledge and benefit from the messages we have tried to share through this publication. It has been a vehicle to challenge you to think about yourself, our company, and – in a broader sense – the country and the world that we live in together.

On a variety of occasions, we have stood up to be counted for those things we believe in or that seemed important to us at the time. We did not ask you to agree with us necessarily, but only to think about things beyond the four walls of your workplace.

To that end, we also tried to encourage many of you to join with Wendy and me to experience and be part of things that you might otherwise not have encountered. Whether it was simply a night out at Beef and Boards, or Mardi Gras in New Orleans, or a trip to one of a variety of locations around the world, we wanted to take you beyond the four walls of your restaurant.

It was, and is, important to us that you learn about things beyond the normal reach and interest level of many of you. The result is that your visits and trips have included numerous live stage presentations, ball games galore, Yuletide at the Symphony, an annual holiday season celebration of our company and your successes, world class cities, countries, museums, ballets, operas, symphonies, Shakespeare, and historical monuments, until your minds were boggled and your feet were sore. We didn't want you to miss a thing, because we knew that for many it was likely a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Through it all, Wendy and I were rewarded beyond our wildest dreams. We watched you experience, learn, grow, and mature into wonderful adults, and in many cases terrific parents. You have shared your families with us, and you have kept us young in mind and in spirit (even though we are no longer quite so young in body!)

Wendy and I have been there for your many highs and some of the lows, for many weddings, graduations, births – and too many funerals. We have been honored to perform duties for you, including serving as father of the bride, reading scripture at your wedding, singing for you at your weddings (apparently when no one else was available), offering a funeral eulogy for loving members of our company family, and even having an adopted child named after us. Life is full of experiences, many of them wonderful, and our company has provided us the opportunity of sharing so much with so many of you.

It is Wendy's and my final wish that each of you do your best to retain and expand upon that which you have gained from your time with our company family. Much of what we have shared with you is within your grasp. You now have the opportunity, indeed the responsibility, to share what you know and what you have

experienced with those who will follow you. Certainly this includes successor generations within your own families, but it also includes those who look to you for direction and guidance within your corporate family. Names and faces may change, but those things which are important and worthy of maintaining now become yours to build upon and share.

Wendy and I have been very blessed to share this experience with literally thousands of young people for nearly a quarter century. Several of you have been with us for nearly the entire time. All of you are and will always remain in our thoughts and prayers. Our name may no longer be on the masthead of your employer, but our name will remain in the phone book. In our retirement, we look forward to counting you as our friends and extended family – and sharing future times with many of you.

LEADERS ARE MADE, NOT BORN

I'm not certain why I think this is a topic worthy of exploration, but I have thought about it often. This has usually been in the context of wondering how it happened, and often in a context of "Why me?" From my earliest school years, all the way up to and including my high school years, I was never elected to lead anything. I was never a class officer, a club officer, or a captain of any team. My only quasi-leadership role at Urbana High School was the day when a few of us decided to redecorate the classroom of one of my all-time favorite teachers, Kathryn "Kitty" Kollmyer, who taught us Latin so well that we actually enjoyed the class and learned the subject. My limited role that day was to draw a beard and mustache on the hallowed bust of Virgil, which I later was told was a sacred artifact of the UHS language department, second only to the Holy Grail. That was the good news. The bad news was that I was so informed in a private meeting in the principal's office, my only such visit during my four-year high school career. Otherwise, I was one of the sheep.

Certainly I had my group of buddies, and from them came class officers and captains and so forth. Among my peers, I was as loud as any and ready to participate in most anything, but it was a time when kids were really pretty straight. We were so busy with music, sports, and classroom work that there was little time for much else. The group I ran with did not include smokers or drinkers, and the vast majority were virgins, boys and girls! At least I think that's accurate! At any rate, it was a good time to be a follower.

I was quite comfortable in that role. As I look back, I believe I was somewhat shy and not very comfortable outside of my immediate group. But I was involved. I played football, ran track, sang in a variety of organizations, and played trumpet in the band. I also did a lot of solo and ensemble work over the years, training for my music to this day. My most memorable mentors and role models from those years were my coaches and music teachers, relationships that lasted for decades after my school years.

The only real exception during those years was during my third and final summer as a midshipman in the three year naval program at Culver Military Academy in Culver, Indiana. I enjoyed those three summers enormously, and my love for the water and my knowledge of boating and navigation began during those summers. I also had enough success in my naval academic work and on several athletic teams that I was appointed company commander of my unit during my final summer.

The operative word here is *appointed*, not *elected*. Each company had a primary counselor and a couple of additional military tactical officers who largely ran the show. Our counselor was Colonel M.A. Estey, United States Marine Corps. Need I say more? Colonel Estey was one tough cookie, so being selected as his company commander was not exactly a cakewalk. Yet if there was ever the perfect primer for Leadership and Command 101, "Ma" Estey (as we whispered behind his back) was as good as it could get.

The colonel put me in charge, and then managed me the rest of the summer. (I should mention that the first few weeks of the summer were tryouts, where a number of us served three-day stints as temporary company commanders and a variety of other positions during the tryout period. Then the permanent jobs and ranks were announced, and away we went.)

We dealt with everything imaginable. There were the normal timetables and activities that the company participated in. These included numerous athletic teams as well as a variety of academic and naval competitions, in all of which we were expected to participate and excel. The company commander's job was a great place to lead by example with knowledge, enthusiasm, and – if need be – a toughness that was usually supported by the colonel. My daily meetings with him were a primer for later life. I wish I had been as much aware back then as I am now of the value of the guidance I received from Colonel Estey. I never saw him again after commencement exercises at Culver that summer of 1954. Were I to see him today, I would let him know that he was one of those people in my life who made a difference.

The only other episode in my high school years where leadership came into play was my membership on the prom planning committee during my junior year. It was customary for the junior class to put on the prom each year, ostensibly in honor of the senior class. Of course, the real mission was to put on a prom that was bigger and better than the one the seniors had put on the previous year. Thus extravaganza, with all the trimmings, was the name of the game.

During one of our earliest planning sessions, I offered the idea of a theme called "Evening in Paris." I suggested that, instead of using the normal tables of eight, we replicate a variety of typical Parisian sidewalk cafes and bistros, each one decorated distinctively, with the dance floor decorated as the famous Parisian boulevard, the Champs Elysees. The centerpiece would be a thirty-foot-high Eiffel Tower . . . that rotated! Not only did it rotate, it was painted with a special kind of paint. When it was bathed in black lighting provided by Grimes Manufacturing, the minutest of details of the tower were brought out. It was a mind-boggling success!

The upshot was that in the fall, when senior class elections were held, I was nominated (for the first time ever) for an office: the office of senior class president. Now we all knew that it was going to be either Ray Stewart, Jim Bills, or Hobe Neiswander, but it was Hobe who nominated me and even gave a little talk about the success of the prom. That is probably the only reason Hobe remains one of my closest friends these many years later. Thank God I wasn't elected. Then I would never have been able to pay him back!

The one other experience during my high school years that I believe contributed to my leadership in later years came through my involvement in the vocal music program at Urbana High School. I was one of thirty-five members of a boys' glee club. We were all from the same class and started singing together in the fourth grade. During the high school years there was also an octet, selected from the main group, that was often invited to sing at a number of local service and church organizations. I estimate that during our four years we probably sang at over a hundred gatherings in and around Champaign County, including a few rare appearances on television stations in Columbus and Dayton. Who can ever forget Bob Braun, Ruth Lyons, Sally Flowers, or Barnett's Amateur Hour? We did 'em all. (Yes, Virginia, television had actually been invented, although it was still only black and white.)

So what does this have to do with leadership? Well, our group needed a spokesperson for all of these events, which ranged from the Mothers' Study Club to the local Rotary Club to the Farm Bureau's annual meeting, and so forth and so on. I was asked to fill the speaker's role, which involved little more than introducing our eight members and our accompanists, and telling a little about each number we were to sing. What I gained was confidence and a comfort level (stage presence); I also learned to polish it up a little bit and customize the remarks, whether we were singing for little old ladies, a church or service group, or a bunch of dairy farmers. I also learned the value (and appropriateness) of humor. Those were real learning years, and whatever abilities I have today on the

platform, I gained during those high school years with the Castleaires Octet. Isn't it funny, how things that seem relatively insignificant at the time can become so very important years later?

My next step was at Ohio State, where I really joined only one organization but then literally threw myself into every opportunity it provided. I pledged Phi Gamma Delta fraternity during my first year at O.S.U. and became an active later the same year. That summer I became rush chairman and published a rushing brochure, extolling the virtues of our fraternity. The next year I became pledge trainer and also took over the job of song leader, putting together the Gold-digger's skits each year. I thoroughly enjoyed all of these positions and felt good about being able to make a contribution. During the spring of my junior year, when the annual officer elections were held, I was elected president of my fraternity.

This was the first election I had ever won, and it was not a job I had sought. I was just a happy kid from Urbana, doing what I loved to do, with a group of friends with whom I still share wonderful times. To say that I was anything less than thrilled would be an understatement. This was an outfit of high achievers. We had world class athletes, major league scholars, campus leaders in every category imaginable, and a large number who would go on to be major players in the country and world in which we live. I don't know if it was just the times or a freak of happenstance, but I still marvel at the large number and quality of the brothers from those years who have made a difference. I won't belabor this, but it might be worth a book of its own. Suffice it to say, I could write a page each about 20 or 30 of these individuals, and each one would knock your socks off.

So how did that one year as president go for me? I have said a number of times that I learned more about business management during that one year than my four years studying business management at O.S.U. I had a board of directors (the House Corporation), and a chairman of the board to whom I had to report. His name was Joe Ray, and he was a boss, a mentor, and a confidant. We worked together on the budget, managed controllables, collected receivables, and dealt with the university when issues needed to be addressed. My contact with Joe was weekly during the school year; we met, walked the grounds, toured the house, and then sat down and discussed any staff problems or other management issues that would come to mind. Many of those meetings included my roommate and house treasurer, Jerry Gherlein. Jerry went on to graduate from the law school of that school in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and then went to work for Eaton Corporation at their world headquarters in Cleveland, Ohio. Jerry recently retired as executive vice president and chief general counsel of Eaton. (Maybe he was a little over-qualified for house treasurer.) We had a great year that year, living in the penthouse at 218 East 17th Avenue and learning our crafts that would serve us both well over the decades to come. We still keep in touch.

From that point on, whatever job or organization I was in, I worked hard at being involved and doing my best to make a contribution. After all, that is what I had observed from my role models and mentors. First and foremost on that list was my father, followed closely by a number of his friends. But it also included Colonel Estey, Joe Ray, coaches and music teachers, and a couple of high school buddies and college roommates. If I am not excited and involved in an organization, I respectfully tender my resignation and wish them the best.

The only elective job I ever sought was as a member of the Urbana City Board of Education. I ultimately served twelve years on that board, six as its president. While in Urbana, I also served as a member of the board of directors of Champaign National Bank and as president of the Urbana Rotary Club. These were all positions that provided me an opportunity for involvement in my community. It was not unlike my business associations where, during the days of Kirby Hatcheries, I was able to

serve on the boards of the National Turkey Federation and the American Poultry and Hatchery Federation, and as president of the Ohio Poultry Association. During my Taco Bell years, I served as the first president of FRANMAC, the national association of Taco Bell franchisees, and I was asked by Taco Bell corporate to serve as the first franchisee on the board of the Taco Bell Foundation.

All of these positions had a common thread, whether they were local or national, service clubs or industry organizations. They all needed leadership, and they wanted people who shared their passion, who would serve them honestly and with commitment, and who would (one hoped) be able to do so in a humble manner, always with a smile and a sense of humor. I am not confident I brought all of those character traits to all of those jobs, but I sincerely tried to live by those standards, values that I believe in and try to bring forward in all that I do.

When it's all said and done, we are the product of those who have loved, nurtured, guided, advised and counseled us over the years. My only advice is to listen to those who genuinely care about you, and pick your mentors and role models with great care. They will always be there for you. And above all else, keep a smile and a sense of humor. Otherwise . . . it ain't worth it!

THE GREATEST GENERATION

We were born in the depression, grew up during WWII and the Korean War, knew all about food rationing and war bonds, and survived our births from mothers who smoked cigarettes and drank alcohol during their pregnancies.

Can you imagine . . . our baby cribs were painted in lead-based paint, we rode bikes without a helmet, rode in cars without seatbelts, drank water from a garden hose instead of a plastic bottle, and still survived.

When we went outside to play (because there was nothing inside to do), we fell from trees, fell from bikes, broke our bones, chipped our teeth – and guess what? There were no lawsuits!

We had teachers with paddles, schools with rules, never a fight at an athletic event, and if any of those rules were ever violated can you believe it . . . our parents were on the side of the school!

Our generation has produced the greatest innovators and inventors, the greatest risk-takers and problem-solvers, and the greatest humanitarians and athletes.

And yet, we are not the greatest generation. The greatest generation is the one that raised us.

THE BEST IS YET TO COME

I don't really have this retirement game quite figured out yet. I do, however, believe that it represents a major change in the control of our lives and lifestyle. For the first time ever, our time and commitments are not governed by parents, or children, or business associates. They are governed by us.

Therein lies the first hurdle. We have a tendency to plan and schedule our time as we have always done – fill it up and keep running in order to keep up. The problem is that our physical and mental capabilities are not quite what they used to be. Result? – schedule overload.

Second hurdle: learn how to plan and schedule to achieve a pace more in keeping with our current physical and mental capacities. Easier said than done. But we're learning.

Third hurdle: the early stages of retirement have too many transitional requirements that need to be blended together with all of the new opportunities of fulfilling the many new projects on our "want to" list. It seems like we feel we must cram it all into the first year and not leave out a damn thing.

Fourth hurdle: devising a system of planning and choosing to turn a sprint into more of a middle distance race and still avoid making it a marathon, because we know we don't have time for another marathon. The aging clock continues to tick away, and its uncertainties only add greater anxiety to the planning process. Answer: prioritize – now!

Fifth and last hurdle: find the time – indeed, make the time – to prioritize. Do it now, make it complete and be realistic. Address "want-to's," "need-to's," and all things that generate and create peace, quiet, love, togetherness, solitude, goals, ideals, fulfillment, funzies, warm fuzzys, and always a smattering of "just for the hell of it."

Beware of filling the schedule; always leave some wiggle room. The schedule tends to fill itself anyway. Besides, we continue to learn that we don't wiggle as fast as we used to.

Recommended starting point for prioritization:

The BIG THREE

1. Take care of our minds.
1. Take care of our bodies.
1. Take care of each other.

Now, let's get on with it.

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

And so there we were . . . cruising along into the retirement years, planning our daily routines in order to accommodate the myriad appointments that keep our minds and bodies running. You know, stuff like tooth cleanings, physical and mental therapy sessions, flu shots, going to the pharmacy to fill prescriptions, loading up on over-the-counter stuff, things that help us pooh more, pee less, and take care of everything (which IS everything) arthritic. And above all else, learning how to manage our personal pain threshold.

Now this is new terminology to me. Manage a pain threshold? I thought the idea was to AVOID the pain threshold. I think this is a buzz phrase for doctors who don't know what the problem is. Besides, I've been managing stuff for forty-six years – important things like chickens, turkeys, cows, tacos, and burritos. What else can there be to manage? PAIN? I don't think so. At any rate, I have not been successful in this management area.

I could have done better, but the cause-and-effect relationship of pain and its sources is a constantly moving target. Aging floats (or attacks) from the toes to the fingertips, touching all joints and muscle masses en route, with occasional bypasses into the largely vacant areas above the neck. Places that no longer grow hair and teeth, that permit brains to lie dormant and plug up the cavities with ear wax and other assorted bodily fluids and extracts too gross to mention. I wonder: is there such a thing as brain floss? H-m-m-m.

In between health care appointments, Wendy and I have traveled and visited with numerous friends. Many of these friendships are from recent years; many others reach back to our elementary and high school days and to our fraternity and sorority days at OSU. We have enjoyed revisiting the days of our careers with those with whom we worked at Kirby Hatcheries or at KirTac/Taco Bell. We have expanded our activity horizons a bit, through Wendy's involvement with Second Presbyterian Church here in Indianapolis, and through my not very intense love-hate relationship with the game of golf.

I have also learned that great golfers tend to take up the sport of fishing in later years, simply to get away from the utter frustrations of the golf course. I learned quickly that there is no "mulligan" in the sport of fishing. You don't need one. Every cast is a good one; every fish is a big one (especially the one that got away), and snarling the line is, well, something the guide can fix. And when you take a grandchild fishing, the world is complete. Grandchildren have no expectations whatsoever. They get a boat ride, help set the anchor, have a picnic on the lake, cast and reel in with great enthusiasm, and are always satisfied with the explanation, "I guess they're just not biting today."

I used to tell people that I needed to get a job in retirement, in order to find some free time. Something about time management might be in order here, but it wouldn't be in keeping with the previous paragraphs. In any case, Wendy and I have decided to damn the torpedoes. It is still full speed ahead, with regular detours and bypasses along old and familiar byways and with new vistas and venues to discover and explore. Above all else, we love to share it all along the way with the many people who have made (and continue to make) our lives filled with blessings and the fondest of memories. Life is good.

EPILOGUE

It is not uncommon for a project to develop into something larger than intended. That is the way it has been with this effort. Each successive page brought a reminder of another episode, another person, or another message. Since I am not being paid by the page, additional volume only results in higher printing costs. But Wendy said it's okay.

There has, however, been one major difference with this project. It has constantly reminded me of the many people who have been a part of my life and the influence they provided all along the way. They included family, friends, teachers, preachers, and simply people from all walks and levels of life, each and every one providing, in his or her own style, a lesson of life.

Like any youngster, I had heroes from my earliest days. Saturday afternoons at the Gloria Theatre in Urbana brought to life some of the best – Hopalong Cassidy, the Lone Ranger and his faithful Indian friend Tonto, and the best of them all, Roy Rogers – with Dale Evans, Gabby Hayes, the Sons of the Pioneers, his horse Trigger and his dog Bullet. This was important stuff; after all, Dale Evans was my first love. These movies were all in black and white, and YES, they had sound! And Technicolor was just around the corner. All of this for a nickel!

Boyhood heroes were plentiful: returning war heroes from World War II (everyone in a uniform in those days was a hero); my two special ones were two of my dad's closest friends, "Uncle" Gene Hyatt, a major in the army, and "Uncle" Raymond "Hagie" Hagenbuch, a lieutenant colonel in the army. They brought numerous goodies back from the war, including such items as a German rifle bayonet and a special saber or knife (a *kukri*) used by the Gurkhas, Nepalese warriors prominent in the British and Indian armies. The hand-carved model of the Taj Mahal in our living room was one of Uncle Hagie's gifts to my parents.

In grade school, one of our greatest treats was to go to the high school football games on Friday night to watch our hero, Tom Watson, perform his miracles on the football field. He was the team's star, and he did everything and was the best in each category. His most unusual habit was to remove his shoe when punting the ball. To this day, I don't know why . . . but it worked. He then became the first kid from Urbana to play football at Ohio State. In the eyes of the kids back in Urbana, he then moved up the success ladder from a hero to some kind of a god. He played four years for the Bucks and finished his career in the Blue-Grey All-Star Game, where he was elected captain of the Blue team.

Well, that was pretty good, but it was about to get better. After Tom graduated and coached at Alton, Illinois, high school for two years, he was hired by Urbana's athletic director, Paul Cook, to come back to his hometown as the head football coach. My classmates and I were freshmen that year, but he was still a hero to us. Our sophomore year, Urbana had an undefeated season for only the second time in the history of the school; the other one was in 1928, twenty-five years earlier. Tom left to coach at Portsmouth the next season, but his legacy continued for the rest of our high school football careers. During our four years at Urbana High School, the football team lost only five games. In my mind, that will always be Tom's legacy, and it began an athletics era at Urbana that continues to this day. UHS has experienced several additional unbeaten seasons and has sent many football athletes on to Ohio State, as well as other institutions, to carry on the tradition that began in 1952. And that is how a legacy is born.

Were I to mention all of the heroes, mentors, and role models in my life, it would take pages, and I would certainly forget someone. So breathe a sigh of relief. There will be no such listing. Suffice it to say that my experience in life's journey has been a little bit of this and a little bit of that. Dozens of people taught me some of life's lessons. Some were friends and family, others were teachers, business associates, and even some whom I did not hold in particularly high regard. But I learned from them all – often just bits and pieces, a little bit of this and a little bit of that, because as is true in life, each of us brings a little something different to the party.

While I have no list, I do have three who stand above the rest. They are my adopted parents, and Wendy. My greatest regret in life is not knowing my parents during my adulthood. My mother passed away when I was 21 and my father when I was 24. Only in recent years have I come to know and appreciate the impact my parents had in a relatively short span of years. They pretty much got me through college, and then I was on my own. They were no longer there to nurture and counsel, but their knowledge, wisdom, and role-modeling continues to govern my behavior to this day. If I am their only legacy, then the burden is sometimes great. Even so, it never has caused me to lessen my efforts to meet what I believe would be their expectations. I have not always been successful in that quest, but it has most assuredly always been foremost in my thoughts. After all, I was not their birth child; I was their chosen child.

When life gets a little tough, it's always nice to have a cheerleader. Parents can often fill that role for us, well into adulthood. Some of us are blessed to find a cheerleader later in life. So it was with me when Wendy became my cheerleader . . . as she continues to be.

She also became a role model and a source of knowledge and wisdom that is life-sustaining for me. She was a major player in the beginning and growing of KirTac, and she has since filled a number of leadership roles within the membership of Second Presbyterian Church here in Indianapolis. Wendy was not a late bloomer. She was simply discovered late, in more recent years when she had time for and interest in providing leadership. Our society increasingly is crying out for leadership. We are finding that at all levels of decision-making our elected and appointed leaders are lacking in many basic qualities – not the least of which is nothing more than on-the-job training. Some simply call it experience. It's difficult to be an effective leader if you have never been a worker. When it was time for Wendy to lead, she had experienced a lifetime of learning the role of leadership. She was ready and willing to share whatever she had to offer, and obviously those around her recognized a great resource. To find a leader today with knowledge, experience, and humility is like finding someone ready to build a legacy. If she were to be my legacy, which she is not, I could not be more proud.

My cheerleader, Wendy.
Muskegon High School,
Muskegon , Michigan, circa 1958.

Roni Evans, Nancy Mabel, and Wendy in their red hats, on a junket to Nantucket.

Wendy with the childhood friends who went to grade school and graduated from high school together. Here they had gotten together in Naples, Florida, in 2001. From left to right, Diane Lundwall, Lieschen Stevens, Wendy Kirby, Mary Sullivan, Jane Ellen Hall, Barb Lamke, and Sue Boice. If you can't read their tee shirts, they say, "How The HELL Did I Get This OLD? – @!%*??*! – "

I opened this book with a dedication page: a dedication to Wendy. Some of what has followed on the pages between the dedication page and this page have, I hope, been interesting, fun, and thought-provoking. Others parts have likely been tedious, boring, repetitious and self-serving. So if you have managed to make it from the dedication to this final page, I thank you. Now, if I may, let me share with you one last personal thought.

In my judgment, the best thing I have written for this book . . . is the Dedication Page. It is important to me that I have at least one constant theme, a message if you will, with which to begin and finish this book. A message that is consistent with all that comes between the first and last page. To be presumptuous, if you leave this reading with anything . . . anything at all . . . I hope you leave with these words about Wendy.

FOR WENDY

Whose patience and tolerance I test on a daily basis;

Whose words of understanding and knowledge always make it better;

Whose strength of will and character are unequalled;

Whose love and comfort are constant and forever;

And who, regardless of how old she may become, will always be wise beyond her years.

Edwin S. Kirby, 2010

portrait by Marie-Dominique Verdier Kirby